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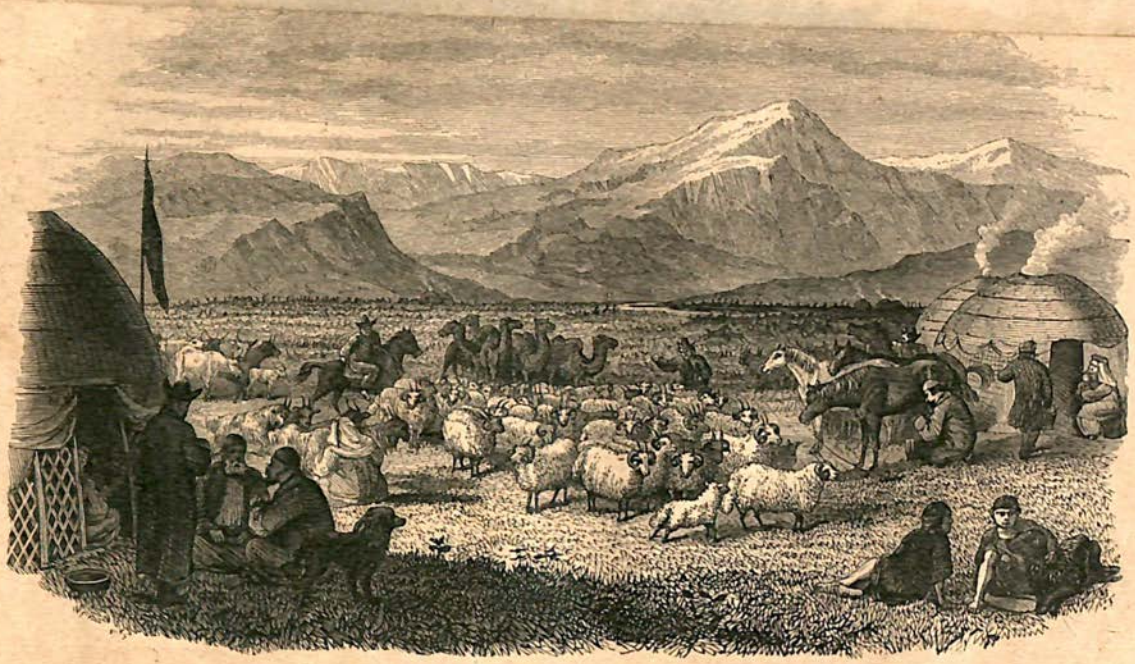

A KIRGHIS ENCAMPMENT—FLOCKS AND HERDS RETURNING AT SUNSET.

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

TARTAR STEPPES

AND

THEIR INHABITANTS

88411

By MRS. ATKINSON

With Illustrations

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1863

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PREFACE

THE reader may perhaps desire to know under what circumstances the following Letters were written, and how it came to pass that an Englishwoman should find her way into countries so remote and so uninviting to those attached merely to the luxuries of life, as Siberia and Tartary.

Being one of a large family, it became my duty, at an early period of life, to seek support by my own exertions. I accordingly betook myself to St. Petersburg, where for eight years I remained in the family of General Mouravioff, superintending the education of his only daughter. In 1846 I became acquainted with Mr. Atkinson, then about to proceed on his travels into Siberia; and on his return, after the lapse of a year, I was married to him, with the consent of General Mouravioff's family, and from the house of the Governor of Moscow a relation of the General's, and

I accompanied him during his arduous journeys, which lasted for six years.

The scientific and artistic results of those travels are contained in the two volumes which he published during his lifetime: but there is little allusion in them to the adventures we encountered during those journeys, and, especially, there is no mention of the strange incidents which befell myself, often left alone with an infant in arms, among a semi-savage people, to whom I was a perfect stranger. My friends have so often importuned me to give them some account of what happened to me in countries where an English lady had never been seen before, and to describe the manners which characterise female society among the wild Kirghis, that I have bethought me to collect some of the letters written on the spot to friends; and these, with slight omissions and alterations, I now venture to present to the public.

EXPLANATION OF RUSSIAN AND TARTAR TERMS.

Ac	White.
Ala	Variegated.
Altin	Golden.
Aman	Good-day.
Aoul	A nomad village.
Balaghan	A booth, made by placing branches of trees in a slanting direction and covering them with birch bark.
Baranta	A robbery, on a large scale, of aoul, women, children, cattle, &c.
Baranae	Madam, a gentlewoman.
Blini	A pancake.
Bogha	God.
Bouran	A storm of snow or wind.
Caziole	A goat.
Dabi	Unspun cotton.
Domavoi	A house spirit.
Fabric	Manufactory.
Gastenitz	A present.
Goosem	In file.
Gornoi Ispravnick	A bailiff of mines.
Granilnoï-fabric	A manufactory for cutting and polishing stones.
Ispravnick	A bailiff of a district; he is usually placed over the peasantry.
Kara	Black.
Khalat	A dressing-gown.
Kool	A lake.

Maral	A deer.
Mischanin	A commoner.
Moollah	A Tartar priest.
Nachalnick	A chief, a director.
Nalifka	A liquor made from wild fruit.
Nechevo	Nothing.
Noor	A lake.
Parok	A rapid.
Pavoska	A vehicle, an open carriage.
Peraclodnoï	To travel post, and change the carriage at each station.
Platock	A handkerchief.
Pood	Thirty-six lbs.
Priesk	A mine.
Sarafan	A dress without sleeves.
Sargoochae	A governor.
Sessedatal	An assessor.
Shaitan	The devil.
Shube	A fur cloak.
Slavnie	Glorious.
Smotritel	An overseer, an interpreter.
Somervar	A tea-urn.
Startioner	A warden.
Sucarees	Rusks.
Taboon	A stud or herd of horses.
Tau	A mountain.
Tchorny	Black.
Tolmash	An interpreter.
Verst	3,500 English feet.
Vintofka	A rifle.
Vodky	A spirit made from corn or potatoes.
Voilock	Felt cloth made from camels' hair.
Volost	A bailiwick, a district.
Yasak	A tribute of furs.
Yemschick	A post-boy, a driver.
Yourt	A nomad tent.
Zavod	A manufactory.

TABLE OF DATES.

1848		1851	
Feb. 13	Left Petersburg.	May 23	Left Irkoutsk for the mountains in the north.
„ 22	„ Moscow.		
March 21	„ Ekaterinburg.		
April 4	Arrived in Tomsk.	Sept. 6	Returned to Irkoutsk.
June 3	Left Tomsk.		
„ 7	Arrived in Barnaoul.		
July 9	Left Barnaoul for Altin-kool.	1852	
Sept. 2	Left the Altai viâ Zmeinogorsk for Kirghis steppe.	May	Left Irkoutsk.
		July	Arrived in Barnaoul.
1849		1853	
Sept. 3	Returned to Zmeinogorsk from Kirghis steppe.	February	Left Barnaoul for Ekaterinburg.
October	Left Zmeinogorsk for Barnaoul.	June 11	Left Ekaterinburg for the Oural Mountains.
		August	Returned to Ekaterinburg.
1850			
June 16	Left Barnaoul for the Yenissey River.		
Aug. 30	Arrived in Irkoutsk.	Dec. 24	Arrived in Petersburg.

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

THE STEPPES OF TARTARY.

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Starting for Siberia—Messages for the Exiles—Packing the Sledge—The Exiles' Gate of Moscow—Our first Stage—Our Courier is drunk, as are all the Postboys—Drive through a Russian Forest—Arrive at Nijni Novgorod—Hospitality of the Governor—The Volga—A Drive on the Ice—Kasan—Roadside bargaining—Beautiful Scenery—Terrors of the Road—Arrive at Ekaterinburg.

Ekaterinburg, March 7th, 1848.

My dear Friend,—As I am now going to plunge into the wilds of Siberia, I shall proceed to fulfil my promise, and give you a faithful account of every matter likely to interest you which may befall me in this land of ice and snow.

Moscow and all it contains are so well known to both of us, that I shall not weary you by recalling scenes, which we have so often visited together. I must not, however, neglect mentioning the kindness of our friends the Capnists, who did everything to render my short

stay agreeable. My first letter told you all about my marriage; and now I must give you an idea of the preparations for this long journey to Siberia.

As the middle of February is past, everything has to be hastened, that we may be on the road before the winter begins to break up; and this keeps me in such a whirl of excitement, that I have little time to spare for jotting down even these few lines before our departure. There is another great drawback to our progress: everybody is enjoying the Maslinitz;* even Mr. Atkinson's man Nicholai cannot be found, and the yemschicks† have made such frequent applications to the vodky,‡ that there seems little chance of their driving. All these circumstances tend to make us anxious about our progress eastward.

On the morning of the 20th we were alarmed by a rapid thaw, which soon flooded the streets of Moscow, and exposed the bare pavement to view, rendering sledging difficult. However, by great perseverance, all the things necessary for our journey were collected before midnight on the 21st, and, notwithstanding that many of our friends urged the absolute necessity of deferring our departure for some days, Mr. Atkinson decided we should start on the morrow at all risks.

During my short stay in Moscow, it became known to the families of many exiles that I was going to visit regions where their husbands, fathers, and brothers had spent more than twenty years of their lives. Each member of these families had something to communicate —

* *Maslinitz*, carnival.

† *Yemschick*, a driver.

‡ *Vodky*, a spirit made from corn and potatoes.

a wife, who had stood at the gate of Moscow with an infant in her arms, to take the last look at the husband and the father, as he was driven slowly past; young children who were now men and women, who had been horrified with the clanking of chains when receiving the last embrace; then there were mothers who had gazed with agony on their sons as they passed under the great archway, and were lost to them for ever; sisters who had received the last salute of those so dear, and brothers who had met here and grasped each other's hands, but were destined never to meet again: all these had some message which they wished to be delivered. Nor could I refuse them this pleasure, although it would, I found, entail several deviations from our intended route. Had it been possible to dine a dozen times in the day, I think we should have been compelled to do so, as each family was anxious that we should be their guests.

There was a melancholy interest in these gatherings which few can appreciate; it was only by a knowledge of the circumstances which had sent their friends into exile, and the difficulty of making any confidential communication to those so dear to them, that I could understand their anxious desire to detain us; nor shall I ever forget the parting and the blessing which they bestowed upon us. It was far into the small hours of Sunday, when we retired to rest for the last time in Moscow.

On Sunday morning we were up ere day dawned, and busy with our preparations, hoping to have all packed before any friend arrived to bid us farewell. It had been arranged that we should take an early dinner, and then start. Immediately after breakfast Mr.

Atkinson, Nicholai, and some others, began packing our baggage into the sledge. When starting on a long journey, this is a matter of no small importance, and I was told that everything depended on the arrangement for our comfort during a journey of twelve days and nights; but as this was being done by one who had acquired practical experience, I had no fear of the results. Package after package was stowed in its place without difficulty; and then the whole was covered with two large bear-skins, giving a most comfortable and inviting appearance to our vehicle, in which we were going to take a journey of nearly 5,000 miles.

I looked at the sledge with no little interest, as it was to carry me among scenes that the General and I had often spoken about, when none of us dreamed that my wish to visit them could ever be realised. How often we have talked about those in exile whom I shall now visit, carrying many a token to prove that even after so long an absence they have not been forgotten!

Although dinner had been ordered at two o'clock, we had a succession of visitors till long past that hour, nor could we deny them access. At length the horses arrived; this warned them of our speedy departure, and the necessity of leaving us in quiet to our repast. It was not a long one, and at half-past three o'clock we were seated in our sledge, the word was given, and the yemschick drove off. The day had been mild and sunny, and the snow melted fast, which caused Mr. Atkinson no little apprehension as to the state of the roads. The horses were soon in a gallop, dashing up the snow and slush in showers. In some parts we

were really brought to a stand on the bare stones, and at five o'clock the sentinel stopped us at the gate of Moscow, an officer demanded our passports, which were shortly returned, and the bar was ordered to be raised. As we passed through, I seemed to be bidding farewell to the world; I thought of the many exiles who had crossed this barrier; and it was a relief when we had passed beyond the great archway.

Amongst the prisoners who are marched through this portal on their way to Siberia, some are steeped in the deepest crimes, others are convicted of minor offences, and hundreds have passed this spot whose only crime was resisting the cruel treatment of their brutal masters.

Shortly after leaving the gate, a turn brought us on a line of straight road, the yemschick put his horses into a gallop, and away we went; he announced that it was freezing—to us most welcome news. The speed of the horses and the tinkling of the bells recalled my thoughts from the distressing events on which they had been dwelling, and reminded me of the journey before us. It was a fine night, and star after star appeared in the firmament, till it was spotted over with its twinkling wonders; watching these as they ascended, and then peering into the deep gloom which began to shroud all objects from our view, caused my thoughts to wander back to you, and those from whom each hour was taking me further away. A feeling of sadness crept over me, from which I was aroused by the driver pulling up at the post station.

All was darkness in the building — not a person was visible, it appeared deserted. Mr. Atkinson desired

Nicholai to rouse up the people and hasten the horses; the man soon unharnessed those which had brought us, and then he vanished in the darkness, and we were left alone. A considerable time elapsed, and no one appeared. I then suggested that it was better to call for Nicholai; this Mr. Atkinson did, but there was no response. He then concluded to leave me in the sledge, and enter the house; he groped his way in the darkness, through two rooms, without finding a soul; in a third he trod on a body, and nearly tumbled over others, but they did not utter a word; a candle was flickering in a corridor beyond; having obtained this, he discovered that he had passed through a room in which six people were lying in a state of drunken insensibility, from whom he could not get an answer; proceeding further, others were found in a like condition. Here he discovered Nicholai fast asleep on a bench, with our road papers and the bag of money lying on the floor; he also was drunk, and had forgotten both us and the horses.

After a weary delay the smatrical, or officer in charge of the post-house, was found. When he saw the seal and signature of the Postmaster General, his faculties began to clear, and by the aid of a whip he soon brought some of the people to their senses. Lights were obtained, and the men were seen staggering to and fro in search of horses. Nicholai received a good shaking, and was deprived of both papers and money, which are henceforth to be my care, so I am now installed in my new office of 'minister of finance.' This seemed to sober him a little; but our prospects were not cheering,

as the officer said we should find the people drunk at every station.

At last four horses were harnessed to the sledge, and a yemschick mounted to his seat, when the postmaster gave him strict orders to drive fast. The man gave a wild shriek, flourished his whip, and the horses started at full speed.

Shortly after leaving the station, the yemschick was obliged to turn into the forest, as it was impossible to run the sledge on the bare road. Even among the trees the snow was found only in patches, but the frost on the grass enabled us to make progress. There was something to me novel and wild in this ride through a Russian forest, where the lofty pines cast a deep shade of darkness over the scenes, and one is apt to imagine that wolves and bears are lurking in readiness to seize on the traveller; but no growl or other sound was heard in these solitudes, save the whoop of the driver and the tinkling of the bells attached to the horses, and these occasionally seemed to be responded to by many an echo. It was with intense interest that I watched every step of our road. Morning found us at Petooshka, a station about 112 versts from Moscow; we had hoped to reach Vladimir, but the continued delays during the night prevented our accomplishing our purpose. I hailed the first dawn of day with delight, having slept but little during this my first night on the great Siberian road; and, not having broken my fast since leaving Moscow, I was desirous of procuring some refreshment. At first, it appeared doubtful whether a somervar * could

* Tea-urn.

be obtained. With pleasure I observed the hissing urn brought on to the table; our basket of provisions was produced, and the eatables displayed to view. Our meal was quickly despatched, and we were soon again on the road. Much snow had fallen during the night; and the weather now became intensely cold, which made travelling better.

On arriving at the ancient town of Nijni Novogorod, I was pleased to find that we should pass the night there, as I had a great desire to see this place. We drove to an hotel in the lower town, dirty in the extreme, and were taken into a small room. I was horrified at finding that everything must be taken out of the sledge. I asked whether it would not be better to proceed at once. Such could not be, Mr. Atkinson having promised to call on Prince Ourousoff, the governor of the town. After partaking of some refreshment, I gladly spread the bear-skins, and stretched my limbs, which felt a little stiff.

In the morning we were up with the sun, when Nicholai made his appearance, and informed us, with a melancholy face, that an officer from Irkoutsk had arrived during the night, who gave a most unfavourable account of the state of the roads; even the ice on the Volga was not considered safe for travelling on. Orders were given to have everything placed in the sledge, and all to be in readiness for our departure.

Whilst I completed my packing, Mr. Atkinson went to pay his respects to the governor, and to make my excuses for not calling on the princess, but they would not hear of our leaving the town without dining

with them, stating how much better it would be to travel by night, when the roads would be harder. Having consented, we had time to stroll leisurely through the town, which, I am told, presents a busy aspect during the fair, which usually takes place at the end of June or the beginning of July. The fair itself is held on the left bank of the Oka, and is reached by crossing a bridge. The upper town of Nijni contains the principal buildings, and like all Russian towns has a pretty and even imposing effect, with its churches, and their star-bespangled domes. The surrounding country must look beautiful in summer. I would gladly have seen more of the place, but four o'clock was the dinner-hour, and we must be punctual. We were received most kindly and hospitably by the family, and were welcomed like old acquaintances. They all felt surprised to think I had the courage to undertake such a journey as we contemplate, and even doubted whether I possessed strength enough to accomplish it. They wished to detain us a few days, so that we might see and be able to judge of the many places of interest in the town. There were the convents or government schools for the daughters of the nobility, the churches, also the manufactories of glass; but the roads would not allow us to delay our journey, Mr. Atkinson being most anxious to reach Barnaoul ere the winter roads were entirely broken up. About six o'clock we took leave of our amiable host and hostess, and returned to our own rooms, where we intended taking tea, and then starting onward.

It was ten o'clock when we left Nijni Novogorod. Our way now was on the ice along the Volga. My heart

beat rapidly as we descended its banks, it having been stated that we should find, in parts, even large holes. A sharp breeze was blowing, everything looked dark and gloomy, I almost wished we had started by daylight; covering myself up, I slept soundly till near the first station, when I was aroused by the sudden stoppage of the sledge, and a confused sound of voices. On enquiry I learned that in front of us was a sledge, which men were endeavouring with poles to lift out of a hole in the ice, into which it had slipped. I felt grateful that the possessor of it had reached the spot before us, as our sledge being more heavily laden would most certainly have sunk in entirely. On the following day the weather was bitterly cold, and the wind keen and cutting, so that on arriving at Kasan I found my face and lips in a fearful state. I am told that throwing a piece of white muslin quite over the head will entirely prevent the frost from injuring the skin. The Russians exercise an effectual but excessively dirty mode of protecting it, which is, never to wash the face, from the hour of starting on a journey, until their arrival in some town where they intend staying.

The state of my face gave me much annoyance, and was very painful. We were invited to dine at the house of one of the professors of the University of Kasan. He was a Persian, who had been obliged to flee his country on account of having been converted to Christianity by one of our missionaries. I found both himself and his wife most amiable.

After dinner our host took the trouble to read to me the Lord's prayer in Persian, so that I might hear the language, which sounded soft and pretty.

On the following day, Sunday, we went to the governor's, Prince Baratinsky, and there met a brilliant party; in the evening we attended a concert, to which we had been invited by the princess.

After leaving Kasan, the roads were again very bad. I kept watch till after the first station (we generally took it in turns), when I fell asleep. We were about to ascend a hill nearly bare of snow. I concluded there would be some difficulty, but I had no idea of what it turned out to be. Just as day broke I awoke, and discovered we were exactly in the same place we were at on my going to sleep, just one verst from the station; the yemschick had been whirling round and round the whole night in vain efforts to ascend this hill. I aroused Mr. Atkinson to tell him what was going on, and Nicholai was quickly despatched back to the post-house for fresh horses and assistance; but, ere he returned, our driver, aided by the light of the morning, had succeeded in gaining the summit; he then took us at a gallop to the station. Nicholai and the horses arrived in a couple of hours, just as we had breakfasted and were prepared to start again.

At this place we found an officer and his companion, a civilian, at breakfast. Vodky was evidently more in request at their morning's meal than tea; its effects were visible. Little civilities passed between us, then a conversation sprang up. A Russian, without the slightest intention of being rude, often asks whence you come, where you are going, and your business, and some, even, what your resources are; and just as freely they give a sketch of themselves.

Having furnished our new acquaintance with as many particulars as we chose to give, the officer, who had a most cadaverous-looking face, as though he was in the last stage of consumption, informed us, in return, that he had come from the Kirghis Steppe, where he had served several years, was then on his way to Petersburg, and thence to Odessa, to join his family, from whom he had been separated for many years; pressed his address upon us, saying how delighted he should be to entertain us at his own home. He then told us in confidence that he had some maps which he should feel delighted to show us. His sledge was unpacked and the maps produced. He placed them on the table with most significant nods and winks, stating they were not permitted to be shown to any foreigner, but, out of the deep respect he had suddenly conceived for us, he would allow us to have a peep at them. (I had procured the same maps nearly a year before in Petersburg for Mr. Atkinson.) He then said, that if we felt any inclination to have them, he would part with them for the modest sum of *forty* roubles. We declined, saying they would be useless to us; he then offered them for twenty; but no! Finding there was nothing to be done with the maps, with an air of disappointment, which he vainly tried to conceal, he placed them on one side; when the little civilian, with his sharp, foxey face, brought forth a pack of cards. Both were anxious to induce my husband to play; their disgust was supreme when he told them he really did not know one card from another, and declined playing.

Nicholai having breakfasted and all being ready, we bade adieu to our new acquaintance, who, too well bred

to display their ill humour, with apparent warmth and cordiality shook us by the hand and wished us success in our onward course; but the invitation to Odessa was not repeated.

At the post-house they had endeavoured to persuade us to place our sledge on wheels, but to this arrangement we could not consent; the peasants said we should find no snow on the sand-hills before us. We had six horses harnessed, and with these the yemschick proposed to take us through the forest, where we should find snow; but the distance was double.

Shortly after leaving the station we turned into a wooded country, where we were soon threading our way among the dark pines. To describe to you the beauty of the scenes we passed through is impossible. Some were perfectly lovely; indeed, had we been driving through a nobleman's park, we should have exclaimed in raptures, how beautiful! it required but the presence of the deer to complete the illusion. I believe the nights are almost more enchanting than the days, when the pale moon is shining, and darting her soft rays down on the ever-green pine trees. In the silence of these lovely nights, as I lie back in the sledge watching every turn of the road, I conjure up all kinds of fantastic images.

On one of these lovely nights, before reaching Perm, I was rather struck by observing that Nicholai never seemed to sleep; each time I awoke there he was, sitting bolt upright — he who had hitherto appeared to do nothing else night or day but sleep. The following morning he was as wakeful as the preceding evening. When evening again came and I saw him still sitting,

I became rather alarmed, thinking the poor man was ill, and mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Atkinson. The affair was fully explained when, arriving at a station, he came to me to say that the people at the post-house wished us to remain the night, as there was a gang of robbers on the road in a wood between the stations. Rumours of them had been spread, and Nicholai, who was a great coward, had feared to sleep, in case of a surprise. Mr. Atkinson merely consented to be prepared for an attack by reloading his pistols, and seeing that his gun was all right. Thus in readiness we started forward, but saw no one; our own solitary sledge was the only thing on the road.

We arrived in Ekaterinburg on March 6th. It was midnight when we drove to the house of a gentleman whose acquaintance my husband had previously made in this town, and who had exacted a promise from him, to make his house his home during the short stay we intended making. Darkness reigned within the building, the family having retired to rest some hours before. They were soon aroused, and we were welcomed with all the heartiness and cordiality of old friends — the voice of welcome in one's native tongue is so cheering to the spirits of the traveller; we sat chatting, till the crowing of the cock reminded us it was time to separate and to seek rest — so necessary after such a severe shaking as we had received, for the roads, in parts, were bare of snow.

No one can describe the luxury of a good bed to lie upon, with clean sheets, but those who have been deprived of these comforts for a couple of weeks, as we had been.

The sun was high in the heavens ere I awoke on the morning after our arrival. The family had been up for hours, but they would not disturb me. On opening my eyes, how smiling and happy everything looked! all my little wants had been studied, even to clean linen, which the lady had had placed ready for me, so that I might defer opening my boxes until a more convenient time.

CHAPTER II.

Ekaterinburg—Dangers of the Road—A Russian Murder—Caution enjoined upon us—Jasper Works at Ekaterinburg—Visit to a Circassian Lady—Resume our Journey—Meeting with the Exiles—Mouravioff—The political Exiles of 1825—Anecdotes of their Mode of Life—Their Treatment by the Siberians—On the Road again—Arrive at Omsk—Churlish Police-Master—Wretched Quarters—Dinner at the Governor's—Arrival at Kaiansk—The lost Dog found—An Escape from Robbers—Bad Roads—Arrive at Tomsk—A strange Couple—Enforced Delay—The Gold Seekers of Tomsk—The Heiress—English Residents in Tomsk—Balls and Dinner Parties—The Archbishop and his Hostess.

Tomsk, April 25th, 1848.

As we shall be obliged to pass some weeks in this town, I shall have plenty of time for writing. I must give you an account of our route hither, which was really a fearful one; but first I will return to Ekaterinburg, and make you acquainted with what took place there, I not having had time to do so before leaving, as I had scarcely a moment to myself, although we spent fifteen days in the town.

I was told by our kind hostess that it was considered a duty on the part of every visitor to make the acquaintance of the principal persons in the town; besides which, several were friends of my husband's; so, what with visiting and receiving visitors, our time passed away very quickly.

And then I had everything to re-pack, as we proposed leaving a box containing valuables in the care of our friends in Ekaterinburg: these articles being quite unnecessary to us on our journey, being, in fact, gifts presented to me on the occasion of my marriage, the loss of which would be indeed vexatious.

There were many stories rife in Ekaterinburg of robberies and fearful murders committed on the unwary traveller. I cannot comprehend how it is that all our friends, instead of trying to give me encouragement, seem, on the contrary, bent on disheartening me. Each one has some horrible story to relate. This being Lent, one gentleman was reminded of a circumstance which took place some few years ago:—

A father and son were travelling together on the same route we intend taking: they stopped one night at a peasant's cottage; it was late, and the inhabitants had retired to rest. Amongst this class of people the top of the stove forms the sleeping apartment of as many of the family as can be stowed away upon it. The travellers were admitted to the only room the house contained; and, having been many hours without food, brought forth their provisions and commenced eating their supper, which consisted of cold meat, &c. Their supper ended, they lay down on one of the benches to sleep, which was not long in overtaking the weary travellers. They had been but a short period in the land of dreams, when one of the men on the stove slid gently down, and, taking in his hand a hatchet (which every peasant carries with him in his belt), with cautious steps approached the sleepers, and, lifting the instrument with

both hands, brought it with such force down upon the head of the poor father, that he literally cleft it in two; he then turned to the son, who was in a sound sleep, and despatched him likewise. The brutal murderer then returned to his berth and slept till morning, when he went and informed the nearest authorities of the two murders he had committed. His object was not plunder, he said, when asked his reason for committing so horrible a deed; he described how he was sleeping, and hearing these two men conversing, he was induced, from what he heard, to watch their actions, and saw them committing the awful sin of eating meat in Lent, how it weighed upon his soul, how he turned away and tried to sleep but could not, how he felt that for the sake of Him who had died to save sinners, he ought to prevent these men from sinning again; he had tried to avoid commiting a crime, which he knew it was, but a voice kept continually urging him on, and saying that he was only putting an end to sin. My informer was not able to say what had become of the man, but, to prevent such a fate being ours, he presented Mr. Atkinson with a hatchet. I assured him he need not fear, for nothing could induce me to sleep in these little hovels, where the heat is almost unbearable; indeed, our meals, which are only two in the day, are regulated by the kind of station we stop at. We always give orders that, as soon as day breaks, we breakfast at the first *clean* station, and in the evening, that we take tea (which is dinner also) before the cottagers retire for the night, as I think you can scarcely form any conception of the unpleasantness of entering one of these

heated apartments, which has been closed for several hours with a number of persons sleeping in it. There are stations on the road where a separate room is kept for travellers, and the further we advance into Siberia, the cleaner they are, the floors so white that one might almost eat off them; we invariably find the peasants dirtier and poorer the nearer they are to large towns.

I presume one reason for my friend impressing the necessity of caution on us was, that we had discharged Nicholai, on account of neglect of duty, and gross misconduct in many ways. The fellow was not to be trusted, and Mr. Atkinson had always treated him with great leniency. I had been rather amused at some of his doings in Moscow. Whilst there, he received a sum of money in advance, to enable him to fit himself out with everything necessary for a journey of two years. At almost the last hour he asked for more, which astonished Mr. Atkinson, as he had received in advance a whole year's salary, and was therefore refused, until he said he wanted to buy something for his 'old mother,'—he might have known his master's weak point—Mr. Atkinson's heart relented immediately. On arriving in Ekaterinburg we found out that he had brought in our sledge a large quantity of goods on speculation, and was occupied in disposing of them, the poor 'old mother' receiving not a single article of all he had brought with him.

We visited the Granilnoï Fabric, where the stones found in the Oural are all cut and polished (I received specimens of many). I here saw men working at a jasper table, on which several had been engaged nine

years; it was nearly completed, and was for the Empress. A wreath of forget-me-nots, in mosaic, surrounded it; it was certainly beautiful, but still did not appear worth the time and labour that had been expended upon it.

We next visited the Mint, and observed the process of coining the copper money. They coined a piece of each kind for me, and placed them in a small box, made purposely to contain them.

A description of the town Mr. Atkinson has already sent you; and the amusements of the inhabitants I hope I shall be able to tell you something about on our return, as we intend passing some little time here on our homeward journey. This being Lent, everyone is quiet; there are only a few dinner-parties, and we have been but to one, that was at General Glinka's.

I must tell you of a visit I paid to a Circassian lady, the wife of a Russian. On entering the room I found the lady sitting on a sofa with a table before it, as is customary in every Russian house; she was engaged with other visitors on our entrance. I approached and was formally introduced by Mr. Atkinson, with whom she was already acquainted; a seat was offered to me near her. The other visitors shortly departed, when we chatted on for nearly an hour. She was a delightful woman, clever and very witty, also very beautiful, with a large well-formed head, thick luxuriant hair, stout, but not too stout for so tall a woman as she appeared to be. When we rose to depart I again shook hands with her, and, as she was an invalid, I begged her not to rise, as I saw it was her intention to do; but she insisted, and actually *slid down* from the sofa on which she was sitting, and

there before me stood a dwarf! As I looked down at her, how I restrained my laughter is more than I can tell; sitting, she appeared a very tall woman; but the comical figure she presented when walking across the room with me was ludicrous in the extreme. Whether the husband, who was a very tall man, had been attracted by her singular appearance or by her money (for she was exceedingly rich) I cannot say. I presume my countenance must have betrayed something of what was passing through my mind, for the husband had a peculiar smile and droll look as I bade him adieu. Right glad did I feel when I was seated in my sledge, where I could indulge in a hearty laugh.

Mr. Tate presented me with a rifle. I had already a pair of pistols, which Mr. Atkinson bought for me in Moscow, so now we have each evening rifle and *pistol* practice, as it is advisable for me to be at least *able* to defend myself in case of an attack being made on our precious persons or effects whilst travelling amongst the wild tribes we shall meet with on our journey. I hope, however, I shall not be called upon to use any of my weapons of defence.

Mrs. Tate had prepared provisions of all kinds for us, as there was nothing to be procured on the road, especially during the fast; at least, we are too dainty just yet to eat the peasant's food; perhaps we shall not be quite so fastidious some few months hence. Black bread I have learned to eat, and, indeed, enjoy it amazingly; this we can procure at any cottage, but white bread we are obliged to carry with us, as also butter; so a goodly stock was provided.

On the evening of Sunday, March 21st, at nine o'clock, we bade adieu to our kind and hospitable friends, who expressed great regret at parting with us. A little snow had fallen on the preceding evening, which enabled us to proceed. After a night's travelling of great difficulty, we reached Kaminskoi Zavod, where we received a most hearty welcome from Madame Gramertchikoff and her son, whose acquaintance I had made in Ekaterinburg. They insisted on our passing some hours with them; we consented the more readily, as I found on the road, as I supposed, that we had forgotten our supply of bread and butter, and Madame Gramertchikoff ordered more to be prepared; but the morning after leaving Kaminskoi Zavod, as I was occupied tugging out the provisions, I came upon our old as well as our new supply; we had a good laugh over the affair, Mr. Atkinson declaring that it was a ruse on my part to procure more. To say truth, we had none too much, this constant travelling in the open air sharpens the appetite.

On our road we passed the monastery of St. Dolomete. It is a magnificent building, most picturesquely grouped together, and in good preservation; it reminded me greatly of the Kremlin at Moscow.

On the 25th we reached Jaloutroffsky, and drove to the house of one of the exiles, for whom we had a gun.

On entering the dwelling, a gentleman in the prime of life came forward to meet us; he appeared not a little surprised at seeing strangers, Jaloutroffsky being off the great post road. I enquired for Mouravioff; he said he was the person I required. I told him I had

come from Petersburg, and gave him my maiden name; I was instantly received with open arms; he then hurried us into his sitting-room, giving me scarcely time to introduce my husband. I was divested of all my wrappings, although we stated that our stay would be short; he then seated me on a sofa, ran himself to fetch pillows to prop against my back, placed a stool for my feet; indeed, had I been an invalid, and one of the family, I could not have been more cared for, or the welcome more cordial. One of his comrades, whose family I was likewise acquainted with, was immediately sent for, as also the wife of one of the exiles, a peasant woman, her husband was dead; many of these poor 'unfortunates' have married with the peasantry, or with the daughters of the Cossacks. This woman came with her two children; I was the bearer of many a message, as well as little gifts for all. There was likewise a request for her to part with her children, so that they might receive proper education. She told me she would think the matter over; we all urged her to consent, seeing it was for their future well-being; she left us, promising to do her best in bringing her mind to look upon the separation as she ought to do. I am happy to say that I have just heard she has allowed the children (a boy and a girl) to go to their aunt's, in Ekaterinburg, with whom we are acquainted, and who will receive them with great affection. Poor mother! at the same time, I know the pang of parting with her little treasures must have been great; but by the parting from them she has shown her great love.

When left alone with our new friends, the conversa-

tion naturally turned upon those whom they had not seen for some three-and-twenty years; various and numerous were the questions they put to us, and not the least interesting subject to them was our onward course. Mr. Atkinson brought from the sledge a folio of sketches he had with him of Siberian scenery. One gentleman said he could not vouch for the accuracy or even likeness to the places represented, never having visited those spots; but what he could say was, that the skies were beautifully true to nature; they were truly Siberian; and how often, he said, have I wished I could delineate them, as in Petersburg they have no conception of what a fine sky is.

Chatting thus, time sped on, and so we stayed dinner, and tea also, and even then felt loth to depart. Our host's wife was a Siberian, apparently a very good woman, but no companion (intellectually speaking) for her husband. Having no children of their own, they had adopted a little girl, who was one night left at their door; they were never able to trace the person who had left it. This custom is quite common amongst the Russians: many of the first families in Petersburg do the same thing; they rear and educate these foundlings, and then bequeath to them their property, just as if they were their own children.

There are several of the political exiles of 1825 living at Jaloutroffsky; they form quite a little colony, dwelling in perfect harmony, the joys and sorrows of one becoming those of the others; indeed, they are like one family.

The freedom they enjoy is, to a certain extent, greater than any they could have in Russia; for instance, full

liberty of speech; they fear nothing; the dread of exile has no terrors for them. But what they have not, is liberty to go where they please; they are restricted in distance, as also in the use of fire-arms; however, the authorities in the town are exceedingly lenient towards them, permitting those who are fond of the chase to hunt wherever and whenever they please. These gentlemen, grateful for the indulgence given them, never fail to return the same night.

Mouravioff was looked upon as one of the most determined of the conspirators of 1825. His brother Sèrge was hanged. His was a hard fate, for the rope broke before life was extinct, and another had to be procured; in the meantime, consciousness returned, and he became aware of what was going forward, when he mildly said, 'it was very hard for a man to have to die twice.' The one who was exiled was condemned to solitude on reaching Siberia; he was separated from his comrades, and banished to the forests of Yakoutsk, where he spent a wretched life; his food was of the coarsest kind. The ground on which he had to lie was nothing but a marsh; here he dwelt two years, having intercourse with no one. Every comfort was denied him, even to books and writing materials.

Count Orloff, in one of his despatches to the officer of justice who had him in charge, and who had received strict injunctions that a rigid supervision should be kept over the poor exile, demanded how he spent his time. His reply was rather laconic, 'he *sleeps* — he *walks* — he *thinks*.' He was after this never interfered with, till he joined his companions in exile.

He is a most perfect gentleman, but there is no

doubt that he has great determination of character; and I should think, to look at him, years of exile have not changed his indomitable spirit; there was nothing subdued in him.

We heard several anecdotes relating to these men on their journey into exile; one was amusing. The officer in command, after they had reached a certain distance from the capital, relaxed in his treatment, and made associates of them, inviting one or more to partake of the meals prepared for himself. At one little place where they stopped, the officer breakfasted with one of his prisoners; he then stepped out of the room to see that all was in preparation for departure, leaving his companion seated on a bench at a table. The exile was sitting reflecting on his position, when one of the authorities of the village entered the room, the doors of which were so low, that everyone had to bend the body to be able to enter. This man came to say that all was ready for starting. He bowed low on perceiving a gentleman sitting, whom he concluded to be the officer. He then entered into conversation which naturally turned upon the scoundrels that were being conveyed into exile, and (continued this man, looking into his face,) 'there is no mistaking they are villains, of the blackest dye; indeed, I should not like to be left alone with any one of them, and, if I might presume to offer a little advice, it would be to observe well their movements, as they might slip their chains, and not only murder you and all the escort, but spread themselves over Siberia, where they would commit all kinds of atrocities.' At this point of the conversation, the bell

rang to summon them all to depart, whereupon the exile arose, but when the visitor heard the clanking of the chains, the farce was complete. Mouravioff told us, he never saw a man look so aghast; when he saw the object of his terror about to move forward, he made a rush at the door, but, not having bent his head low enough, he received such a blow that it sent him reeling back into the room, and sprawling on the floor; but he picked himself up quickly and bolted, and no more was seen of him.

At one of the towns these poor fellows passed through, the people wished to stone them; the officer and gens-d'armes had much ado to prevent the peasantry from carrying their intentions into execution. In Siberia the lower classes perfectly adore the Emperor; there is scarcely a cottage without a portrait of one or the other of the Imperial family.

At Jaloutroffsky they had not received the news of the revolution in France—it had only reached Moscow on the day of our departure—thus we were the first to carry it; they were greatly excited, and many were the speculations as to how it might end. It probably brought to their minds scenes and events in which they had acted a part years ago.

After delaying our departure till evening, we were at last obliged, though reluctantly, to bid them farewell. They gave us books to read on our way, including a gift of three from Mouravioff, with simply Jaloutroffsky and the date written in them, as a souvenir of our visit. We made a promise that on our return we would pass a day or two with them.

We now had good roads, and travelled on fast. I here adopted a new method of procuring horses quickly: and this was, that as we approached the stations, I used to blow a horn, which had been given me by Mr. Tate, in case of our getting separated in the mountains, so that I might be able to let the party know where I was. I used to blow this horn as we drove up at each station, when out rushed all the people to know who it was; it was capital fun, and gave great importance to our arrival; indeed, they were so amused that we obtained horses, without the slightest difficulty or delay.

As we travelled on, the roads varied; at times, the snow was so deep, we stuck fast, and were obliged to send to the villages for assistance. The country we now passed over was neither pretty nor interesting to us; it was one white waste, with a cold cutting wind; but the last stage to Omsk, the roads were entirely clear of snow. It was four o'clock P.M. of Saturday the 27th, when we reached the town; we drove to the house of the Police-master, having a letter for him from a young man, an acquaintance of his and ours, whom we had met on the road.

A Cossack presented himself. On our asking for his master, he said he was sleeping and could not be disturbed—at six we could see him, which was the hour he usually awoke. Mr. Atkinson told him he could not be kept waiting in the streets; that he must see him, therefore he must be awoke. The poor fellow asked us in, and went, apparently with great reluctance, to obey the orders.

In about ten minutes the sleeper made his appear-

ance, in a dirty greasy dressing-gown. He had a most malicious countenance. With a shrill squeaking voice, he demanded our business. Mr. Atkinson handed him the letter from his friend. Having perused it, he flew into a great passion, and demanded how we dared to awaken him, and was turning upon his heel to walk away, when Mr. Atkinson presented his official papers, saying that perhaps those would command a little more civility than his friend's letter had done. He took them, and having read them, appeared a little annoyed; he then called a Cossack, and gave him orders which we did not overhear. He said the man would conduct us to quarters.

We left him without his having recovered his equanimity of temper; the disturbing of his rest had been too much for him; indeed, I think both parties were mutually dissatisfied.

The Cossack now had us driven to the outskirts of the town, to a most horrible place—we had to pass through a room on the floor of which men were lying stretched out in all directions, some smoking, and others talking at the utmost pitch of their voices; it was not pleasant, and, moreover, the room we entered was cold; however, we succeeded in getting a fire and procuring something to satisfy our hunger—our sledge was unpacked, and we set about making ourselves as comfortable as we could under the circumstances. It was now near ten o'clock, so we were glad to spread the bear-skins on which to stretch our cramped and bruised limbs; for six nights I had not had my clothing off.

The following morning we were up early, Mr.

Atkinson being desirous to call upon Prince Gortchikoff with his letters. He received us most politely, and acceded to Mr. Atkinson's request for an escort to travel in the Steppe.

He then enquired what kind of quarters had been given to us. Mr. Atkinson informed him, and likewise what had occurred. He was very angry, and despatched a Cossack to the Police-master, with orders to have us removed immediately into proper quarters. The prince then invited Mr. Atkinson to dine with him, saying, how sorry he was that he had no lady to receive me.

At one o'clock Mr. Atkinson went to the prince's, where he met a large party, Sunday being the day on which the officers dined with him. The prince introduced my husband to them all, and then enquired how we liked our new quarters, and if we were comfortable; he was much annoyed when told that the Police-master had taken no notice of his request: he despatched a Cossack with an imperative order: in an hour's time I was comfortably lounging on a sofa in a general's quarters.

The following morning Mr. Atkinson had to go to the prince for his papers. I went also to take leave of him. He then said, that only his staff dined with him that day, and, if I would excuse the presence of a lady, he should much like me to dine with him. Having accepted the invitation, and all being arranged about our road, we drove to Baron Silverhelm's, the head of the topographical department. Both he and the baroness strongly urged us to drive straight to their house on our return, and remain some weeks, but I doubt if this will be our way back; I hope it may, as now we can see

nothing of the town, the roads being literally impassable. Altogether, Omsk had not a very prepossessing appearance whilst we were there.

At eight o'clock we left for Tomsk, Mr. Atkinson being in great dread of the rivers breaking up before our arrival. We had rough travelling, the country was not interesting, some of the villages were prettily situated and beautifully decorated. At Kaiansk my husband hoped to find his dog, which had followed a pack of wolves some distance when he passed this way on his road to Moscow to fetch me; and, in his hurry to go forward, he had not been able to wait for her return. Orders were left with the post-master to have her taken care of, the dog being a favourite. I had a kind of wish that we might not find her, as I had been told she slept in the sledge, and I had fully made up my mind that no dog should sleep in a sledge with me.

On arriving at the village, Mr. Atkinson whistled, the poor brute recognised his voice immediately, and came bounding over the top of the low hut, disdaining to walk through the gate. As I looked at her I thought I never saw anything more beautiful; she was a steppe dog, her coat was jet black, ears long and pendent, her tail long and bushy; indeed, it was a princely animal; the red collar round her neck contrasted so prettily with her coat, and then to see the delight of the poor beast as she leapt into the sledge; I do not know which was happiest, dog or master. Having rewarded the peasant we drove on, but the dog never once annoyed me by entering the sledge; when tired with running, she used to occupy Nicholai's place beside the driver.

One night, being much tired from the continued shaking and bumping on the bad roads, we had both fallen into a sound sleep, when we were aroused by the low growling of the dog. We started up on finding that the sledge was perfectly still, and on looking out found that two of the horses were gone, and we not near a post-station, there being only two or three huts surrounded by a forest. Mr. Atkinson jumped out, when he perceived four men standing near the sledge but no driver; he called out loudly for him, and, receiving no answer, demanded horses of these men. The fellows were exceedingly insolent, and bade him go to the next station and get them. There was no mistaking into what sort of hands we had fallen. They now came forward and commenced unharnessing the remaining horses, but my husband told them he would shoot the first man who attempted to take one away: they paid no regard to his words. I then passed him his pistols, the click of which, and his determined look, evidently produced some effect, as they now desisted. After some talking amongst themselves, they commenced moving off towards the forest; this my husband would not permit. He said he would shoot the first man who stirred; they declared they were going for horses; he told them one man was sufficient for that, and more he should not allow to go. There was again much talking, Mr. Atkinson walking up and down beside the sledge, keeping sentinel, and Jatier (the dog) walking by him, with tail erect, apparently by her continued barking not relishing the society she had got into, or perhaps she was expecting a fracas such as is common at a Kirghis Aoul.

At length, one of the men went off into the forest, and in about ten minutes returned with two horses, which he harnessed to the sledge, and then mounted the box. Mr. Atkinson seated himself and away we went, not a little delighted to get out of such a den of thieves, as they doubtless were. You may rest assured I slept no more that night. At the next station a complaint was made, but it was unmistakeable that no further notice would be taken of the matter; evidently, they were all in a clique, and we had no time to stay and make a declaration to the proper authorities, being too anxious to proceed.

There is no doubt our yemschick had perceived we were asleep, as the sledge was not closed on account of a feeling of suffocation, which always came across me when it was, and that he took the opportunity of driving us into the forest, intending at the least to rob, if not murder us. As we drove away from this horrid place, we observed him peeping out from behind the trees.

For some stations before reaching Tomsk we had no snow at all; how we managed to drag on is a mystery. At length, we got on to the Tom; this was a great assistance, but about three stations before reaching the town we had to cross the river and ascend the bank; the water was so deep on the ice that we feared everything in the sledge would be spoiled; however, we passed in safety, and about four o'clock of April 4th we arrived here, right glad to do so, as you can form no conception of what the roads are on the breaking up of the winter; they remind one of the waves of the sea,

only there the boat rides over them with ease, whereas here we rise on the top of the wave and then sink down with a thump as if one's very life was being shaken out. This does not happen merely now and then, but we have a succession of them for versts and versts together; that the sledge is not smashed to atoms is a wonder, and, as for sleep, you may judge we had but little of that; it requires a pretty strong constitution to endure for days and days together such rough travelling as we have here; we are told the poor couriers live but a few years.

We are for the moment comfortably established in the house of the governor, but he and his family are at Barnaoul. There are no inns here as in other places, though there is one house where persons can go and dine; a strange couple it is kept by. A travelling caravan once passed through the towns of Siberia, containing many wonderful things, amongst the rest a German giantess and a dwarf Albino; these two, weary of the life they were leading, agreed to marry and settle down, she being an excellent cook, and he a good hand at making port wine; the result was the dining-rooms of Tomsk.

We shall be obliged to make a longer stay here than we had the slightest intention of doing, it being impossible to travel either by winter or summer roads; indeed, the post is stopped, there is no possibility of crossing the rivers. We are not the only persons detained, for Mr. Livashoff, whom we met, has arrived from Ekaterinburg, and cannot continue his route to Irkoutsk. He got here in a worse plight than we did; he had been induced to put his sledge on wheels, one of which came off

shortly before he reached the town, and he was dragged in with the three; he was in such an awful condition, that he was in bed two days to recover himself.

Since our arrival here, there has been a number of balls and parties: we were just in time for the Easter festivities; it was the last week of the fast when we got into Tomsk. First, I went and made the acquaintance of all the notables of the town, they are principally gold seekers. Mr. Astersghoff is one of the wealthiest, and possesses rich mines in the Yenissey, which we shall visit; he showed us some fine specimens of gold, weighing 25lb. and 30lb. each. These miners have magnificent mansions, and live in great state. We likewise visited the vice-governor, a most amiable and gentlemanly man; he will not be able to hold his office much longer, having married the daughter of a gold-seeker. A government officer is not allowed to work mines of his own, and as he now possesses them he must give up his post. He is just married; his wife was the only daughter of a poor peasant, her mother died whilst she was young; this child used to run about the streets bare-legged until she was a good age. When the rage for gold-seeking was so great, the old peasant thought he would hazard his little savings which he had collected for his daughter's dowry, so started off one fine day; fortune rewarded his efforts, for he found a mine, which proved to be very rich; he now sent his daughter, of whom he was justly proud, to a school, where she learned to read and write.

The poor fellow did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his labours, he died two years ago, leaving his daughter a rich heiress at the age of fifteen; her educa-

tion is still being continued; her husband has provided her with teachers, who come daily. A more graceful or beautiful creature it has rarely been my lot to see. She receives her visitors and sits at the head of her table, as though she had been accustomed to her present position from her birth, and yet so modest withal.

There are also two Englishmen here: one is practising as a doctor, and many agreeable hours we have passed in the society of him and his wife; but the other is an exile, banished for forgery, which, from all accounts that we can gather, he never committed, but bore the blame for another, never supposing it would lead him into exile; that other never came forward, but, it is said, basely deserted his friend; he is now living a most unexceptionable life, respected by all who know him; he has a situation of great trust given to him. The trial proved too great for his wife, who followed him; she, poor woman, was a little deranged. I went to see her, she had expressed a wish that I should do so; for a while she sat and talked rationally enough. In her look there was more of sadness than insanity.

The balls and dinner parties to which we went were, with one exception, conducted in much the same way as those we attended in Petersburg and Moscow. Amongst the guests there was no mistaking the wives of the wealthy miners. They were dressed with good taste—you will say, where is the Russian who does not dress well?—and wore a perfect blaze of diamonds.

The dinner party which differed from the others was at the house of a rich merchant, as well as gold-seeker; some forty persons were assembled. The archbishop,

the most important guest, sat at the head of the table, it being customary, at a merchant's house in Siberia, for the host and hostess to march up and down the room to see that each guest is well supplied, especially with champagne, which is drunk in large quantities. The hostess was devoted to her distinguished visitor, and took care that he was well plied with English porter as well as wine, which he appeared to appreciate, if one might judge from the quantity he imbibed, and there was not the slightest difficulty in inducing him to do so. Dinner went on smoothly enough till the sixth course, fourteen was the complement, when the archbishop desired to rise, having already more than satisfied himself that the dinner was in every way excellent. To have seen the horror of the lady of the mansion would have amused you. However, she succeeded in soothing the worthy prelate, who sat down again and recommenced eating and drinking, as though he had been deprived of food for months. As for conversation, he was too much occupied to spare time for that; he indulged in a few coarse jokes, which, unfortunately, are everywhere tolerated in Russia.

Mr. Atkinson, who was seated on his left hand, made many efforts to draw the clerical gentleman into conversation, but all in vain; he gave up the hopeless task, and turned his attention to the gentleman who sat next him. As you know, it is customary for the gentlemen to sit on one side of the table, and the ladies opposite.

Two other courses had been served, when now the archbishop thought that, if everyone was not satisfied, they ought to be so. The quick, sharp glance of the

hostess had observed all; she was at his side in a moment; his leaving the table was not to be thought of, he must at any cost be made to sit still. The dinner was but half over — a dinner that had been days preparing, and for which no expense had been spared; his rising would be the signal for all the other guests to do the same; he was coaxed and persuaded like a spoiled child to sit still; but he would no longer eat, only drink; he sat as sullen as if the rod had been administered. The hostess whispered soft soothing words into his ear, she scarcely ever left him. He then gradually lay back in his easy chair, and dropped off into a comfortable sleep. The brow of our hostess cleared up, she was able to continue her wanderings round the table. The descent of the sleepy god appeared not only a relief to the hosts, but to the whole party assembled; and, but for the noise of the revellers, the sounds which issued from the head of the table might not have been agreeable.

The dinner ended, all rose from table; two of the gentlemen approached the great dignitary of the Church, and supported him out of the room. No one took the slightest notice, nor spoke a word, and we saw no more of him. Some days after, Mr. Atkinson received an invitation from him; he also expressed a desire that my husband would allow him to see some of his pictures, and sent men to fetch them. The answer was, that, if his reverence would call, he should be happy to show him any drawings he had, but he never carried them to anyone, excepting to the Imperial family. The archbishop was, as you may judge, mightily offended.

CHAPTER III.

Resume our Journey—Beautiful Flowers—The Banks of the Ob—A stormy Night—Whistling for a Wind—Arrive at Barnaoul—Domestic Life in Barnaoul—Dinner with the Director of Mines—Pleasant Society—Picnics—Tale of a Head-dress—Opposition to any further Progress.

Barnaoul, June 19th, 1848.

It is long since I took up my pen to address you. The fact is, I have been ill; this rendered me incapable of occupying myself in any way. I am glad to say my indisposition—which was, no doubt, a severe cold—has been frightened away by physic and leeches, or perhaps by the sight of the veiled Tatar lady, who came to apply the latter; none but Tatars keep leeches here. I should have preferred one of the good-natured Russian peasants, with her rosy, chubby cheeks, to have acted the part of doctoress, rather than the ugly tawny-faced Tatar; but I had no choice in the matter.

I am not sorry we have quitted Tomsk: it is decidedly not a pretty town, though there are things of interest in it, and also some very kind, good people, who endeavoured to render our stay as agreeable as possible.

We left Tomsk on June 3rd, and a splendid morning it was for our journey. The water in the Tom was still

high, but we crossed without difficulty, and then what a lovely ride we had! The valley which we crossed was one sheet of deep orange colour, from the vast quantities of globe anemone growing there; and in some parts we came upon large patches of pale blue forget-me-nots, contrasting beautifully with the orange, and then the numerous shrubs, the blossoms of which gave forth perfumes which quite scented the air; it was a scene of loveliness such as I had never beheld. On reaching the woods, we came upon deep blue iris, and many other flowers; I frequently delayed our progress by getting out of the carriage to gather the sweet, wild, fresh flowers — it was such a delightful change after the wearisome balls and dinner parties we had been frequenting. I would have lingered for days, had it been possible. After filling the carriage with flowers we continued our way. I daresay you will be astonished that we still found snow in many parts.

Our progress was slow on account of the many streams we had to cross, which was only accomplished with difficulty. At times, we had as many as six horses to drag us through the various pools of water. On reaching the Ob, along the high banks of which we travelled, what a splendid view we had! The water had overflowed the valley in parts, more than twenty versts broad. The tops of the groups of trees rising above the water appeared like so many islands dotted over its broad surface in all directions.

We had now to descend the bank in order to cross the Ob; we found the water deep in many parts; at times, it was up to the bottom of the carriage and caused us

much uneasiness, as we feared that each step would place us in a position from which it would be difficult to extricate us. At length we reached the river, it was near ten A. M.; we found it utterly impossible to cross, the wind was so very high, indeed it was a perfect hurricane. We never for a moment entertained the thought of returning to the station, hoping the wind might abate, and allow us to cross, so the horses were unharnessed and taken away, and we were left sitting on the bank. We had hoped to reach Barnaoul by dinner-time, but the hope was a vain one.

Hour after hour passed, and we sat anxiously watching, trusting that with the setting of the sun the hurricane would calm; but the sun went down, and the storm if anything was greater; we saw a fearful night was in store for us; we heard the thunder raging in the distance, the poor boatmen were huddled together under a strip of canvas, and our Cossack with them.

To return to the station was now impossible, or even to think of searching for a dwelling of any kind; the deep pools of water we had no wish to encounter, and so with a good laugh over our little misadventure, we made ourselves as snug as possible for the night; we had breakfasted at six o'clock, so we had passed a good many hours without food. I consoled myself with the thought that some poor creatures had not even a shelter so good as ours.

The amusing part of the affair was, that on our road that day we had been terribly annoyed by mosquitoes, who attacked us without mercy; there being not a breath of wind, and we advancing slowly, they had full

opportunity of indulging their voracious appetites; at length they tormented us to such a degree, that I begged of Mr. Atkinson to try the sailor's remedy when overtaken by a calm; he complied with my request; and, as if the signal had been answered, the wind sprang up and at length became a gale; at the moment I felt pleased, as the mosquitoes now no longer tormented me; but I dearly 'paid for my whistle,' as our dreary night on the banks of the Ob fully proved. However, it gave us something to laugh at, and I made a promise never to be caught meddling with the wind again.

At daybreak we aroused the men, and urged them to take us over, although the wind was still blowing furiously. After a great deal of talking, they at last consented, and at four o'clock we embarked, and in three hours reached the opposite side in safety; horses were soon procured, and we rolled along. Hungry though I was, I would not consent to take breakfast, preferring to reach Barnaoul, which was not far distant; a piece of bread satisfied the cravings of the appetite.

We drove to Mr. Stroleman's — he is one of the officers of the Zavod — to know where we should find quarters; both he and Madame Stroleman wished us to remain with them; we accepted this kind invitation, and were soon making a good breakfast after our long fast. The family appeared pleased at the return of my husband. The following morning I was presented by him to all his friends, who received me with great kindness.

I must endeavour to explain to you how the ladies

of Barnaoul pass their time. Part of the morning is devoted in aiding the governess in the education of the children; then they do not disdain to occupy themselves in superintending the housekeeping department; indeed, they rather pride themselves on it; each lady has her store, *not closet*, but *room*, and a large one it is.

The domestic arrangements of a house, as you well know, are rather a weak point with me; I never lose an opportunity of seeing all I can in this way; so into all the store rooms I went; they contained almost every article in dry goods that you can name. There are groceries of every kind and description, with bins fixed round the room to contain them; then there are tubs of flour, boxes upon boxes of candles; in short, a well-stored magazine, and the neatness which prevails here, as in every part of the house, was pleasing to see, and cleanliness reigned supreme.

Necessity obliges each family to lay in a store of dry goods sufficient for a whole year, and woe betide the unlucky mortal who may have miscalculated his or her wants.

In the month of February the apothecary takes his departure from Barnaoul for the fair at Irbit, to procure thence the necessary government stores; he is also furnished with funds from the principal families, and a list of all the articles they may require, which he purchases for them, so that on his return he has the appearance of a wealthy merchant, journeying with a large caravan. His task is rather an arduous one, but he performs it with great goodwill; each one of the officers

in this place is willing to serve his neighbour; indeed, they are like members of the same household, living in peace and harmony.

Their amusements consist in social meetings at each other's houses, and many a pleasant evening have we passed with them.

All the officers dine with the Nachalnik, or Director of the Mines, on Sundays, and during our stay we did the same; after dinner they return home to take their siesta, without which I do not believe a Russian could exist; and in the evening, between seven and eight, they return accompanied by the ladies; the younger usually pass the evening in dancing, the elder ones play at cards; at eleven, supper is placed upon the table, which all partake of, and then retire, reaching their homes by midnight.

On Wednesday evenings another officer entertains the little circle of friends; here the gentlemen play cards or chess, and the ladies take their work. My first evening spent amongst them was a most agreeable one. I immediately felt at home, and as though I had known them for years. The time passed merrily. Afterwards they begged of me to bring my husband in with me, and then I had occasion to see how much he was beloved by them; when he sat down they formed a circle around him, and told me he was the life of their Wednesday evenings. On Friday evenings they meet under another roof to partake of the hospitality there provided for them. What renders these meetings so agreeable is the simple and unostentatious way in which the people assemble together.

During the summer months, scarcely a day passes without a picnic being organised by one or other. The servants are despatched beforehand with all the necessary apparatus for tea, and right merrily do all pass their time. These picnics are generally for the amusement of the children, who are joined in their games by old and young; then we have charming walks in the woods, to find mushrooms or gather the wild fruit and flowers. Then there are other days when the gentlemen have shooting pic-nics. I wish you could see the provision that is made for their sport; how they consume all the wine they take is rather mysterious, and it often happens that a man returns twice or thrice for more champagne.

We went to a ball in honour of Madame Annossof's name's-day. General Annossoff is governor of Tomsk. Dancing was kept up till a late hour, and during the evening we had fireworks, which were really very beautiful. The whole day had been one scene of gaiety, for we all dined at the General's; here the dinner-hour is two o'clock.

The weather being beautiful, the company, during the intervals of dancing, refreshed and amused themselves by strolling through the large gardens, which was certainly preferable to the heated atmosphere of the saloons; a ball in June seems unnatural. I must mention a little incident which took place with the General, who is rather an absent man, and who had sent to Petersburg for a head-dress to present to his wife; it arrived, and was found by him to be very beautiful. In the morning he presented himself at his

wife's dressing-room door, but was told she was busy dressing and could not see him at present. As he was promenading up and down the rooms waiting for her, a servant announced a visitor; he started off to his cabinet to receive him; in the meantime, his wife being ready for church, and finding the General occupied, went away without seeing him; on her return there was a succession of visitors and subsequently dinner, and afterwards preparations for the evening, so the cap was no more thought of. During the evening, as the gentlemen were playing cards, the General drew out his pocket-handkerchief, when there was an outburst of laughter from all present — it was the unfortunate cap which had been brought from Petersburg at so large a cost, which he was using. When the visitor was announced in the morning, he had forgotten it was a cap he had in his hand, and thrust it into his pocket, presuming it was his handkerchief; it is needless to say the cap was ruined.

Mr. Atkinson and Colonel Sokolovsky have gone together to the Mrassa, and the upper part of the Tom, where the Colonel is going on his usual summer visit to the gold mines, so that my husband will have an excellent opportunity of seeing all that region, and sketching it. The ladies have persuaded me to stay here during his few weeks' absence; but I cannot agree to their proposal to stay with them whilst he goes to Altin Kool, or the Golden Lake, though they are trying their utmost to persuade me to do so. They say it is ridiculous, the idea of my going, as the gentlemen get thoroughly knocked up who have ventured so far; however, I have

a little wilfulness in my disposition, and am determined to try, and it will be rather odd if I do not succeed. One lady says I may be able to ride one or two days, and she will even give me three, but more it is impossible to do; so they expect me to return alone.

CHAPTER IV.

Leave Barnaoul—Arrive at Bisk—The Colonel's Family—A Ball Dress—Society at Bisk—The Valley of the Bia — Sandyp — Exchange our Carriage for Horses—Dangers of the Way—A Bivouac—A narrow Escape—A Kalmuk Romance—Suicide for Love—The rejected Suitors—A Night of Rain—Escape from the Rapids—The Altin Kool, or the Golden Lake—The Power of Music—A Storm on the Lake—Scanty Provisions—Weather-wisdom—Sport—Waiting for a Bear—Kalmuk Visitors—A faithful Attendant—Delicious Fish—A Boon granted—Cossack Conscience—A majestic Scene—Sagacity of the Horse—Descent of the Katoonia—A surprised Peasant—Inquisitive Attendants—Want of Cleanliness—Enormous Fruit—Annoyed by Insects—Descend the River—Sketching a Priest—A Talmash Rebuked—A dense Mist—Singular Method of procuring Horses—A hospitable Dwelling—Altai Volost—Silver Smelting Works—Primitive Custom—Start for Semipolatinsk—The Great Kirghis Steppe—Aiagooz—A busy Scene—Farewell to Acquaintances—A rare Gift—A strange Sight—Culinary Operations—Woman an 'Outcast'—A Souvenir—Wonderful Scene—A Mirage—Fearful Thirst—A briny Liquid—Rich Drink—Our Companions—A mendacious Attendant—Peaks of the Alatau—Cutting Wind—Overcome by Fatigue—Welcome Reception—Cossack Graves—Deep Sand—Patience and Resignation—A poetical Genius—Reach Kopal—Premature Birth of a Son.

Kopal, October 17th, 1848.

I THINK it better that I should begin from the time I posted M.'s letter, and tell you, as far as I can, everything that has taken place since that time. Well, in that letter I said Mr. Atkinson was gone to the Mrassa with Colonel Sokolovsky. I waited his return in order that I might be able to answer your letter; but, when

he did return, I had immediately to prepare for my departure on a journey of several months, which was to commence in two days' time. Remember, it was not as it was in Petersburg, where I had only my own 'traps' to attend to! I had, in the first place, to separate what would be necessary for us in the Steppe, from the clothing we should leave behind. Then there were dry provisions to think of and to purchase, as in the place we were going to there was nothing at all to be obtained, excepting sheep, and *they* not always; then all these were to be packed, and so contrived as to occupy the very smallest compass possible. Believe me, I was glad when all was finished; I was up late at night and early in the morning. Moreover, I had bags to make to contain the different articles, as also for bullets and shot of different sizes. Then there was leave-taking, and sighing, and sorrowing because I would go, and various prognostications as to the result of the journey; and, to say the truth, I left our friends reluctantly, having spent so pleasant a time with them all.

At last we took our departure from Barnaoul, July 9th, in a pavoska for Bisk, a town in the government of Tomsk. The day was fearfully hot. On arriving at the Ob, we found the water had fallen considerably; still it was high and difficult to cross; the transit occupied us nearly five hours. On the road beyond, instead of deep pools of water, we found deep mud, through which it was difficult to draw the carriage.

The road was now new to us, after traversing the Ob, and exceedingly uninteresting; we could just see a dim outline of the Altai mountains, but very distant.

At the last stage but one before reaching Bisk, we had a sad stoppage; it was about eleven at night when we discovered that we had lost Mr. Atkinson's shube, or a fur cloak; this was very unfortunate, it being the only warm covering we had, and, besides, it was expensive. The Cossack took one of the horses to go in search of it, whilst we sat waiting his return. Hour after hour passed without any signs of him—we began to be very uneasy, as the night was dark, and the roads bad. Four o'clock in the morning still found us waiting and watching; at length, we resolved to go on to the next station, and despatch some one in search of him. One hour after our arrival we were rejoiced to see him walk in: he had returned to the station whence we started to see if it had been left there, as he had searched along the road as well as he was able in the obscurity without discovering it; but, alas! no one had seen it, so he wended his way back, when, within two versts of the spot where he left us, he found the shube lying on the side of the road.

Arrived in Bisk, we drove to the Ispravonik's, who received us most politely, and gave orders to have all prepared for our onward journey. For instance, an interpreter was necessary, also another Cossack, then we had to procure vodky for the men, and various other little arrangements to make.

Colonel Keil (the officer in command of the Cossacks) called upon us and invited us to tea; he was a most gentlemanly man; we spent several hours with him; my husband gained much information from him; but, unfortunately, I was the guest of the wife, and from her

I would defy anyone to gain information upon any subject, excepting it might be dirt! and on this point I fancy her information would be original. On entering the large court-yard I observed the nurse-maid with two fine children; one was sitting on her lap whilst she was searching about the hair and occupied *à la chasse* of I leave you to judge what—rest assured I was not prepossessed with the place. At first, I did not for a moment suspect they were the children of the house, but afterwards they were ushered in to make our acquaintance.

After spending some hours with the Colonel we returned to the Ispravonik's to prepare for starting; but he so earnestly entreated of us to stay for a few hours longer, that we consented. There was a ball in honour of his wife's name's-day. I felt a little abashed at my costume, which, though exceedingly pretty, was not according to our English notions. I will try and describe it to you. The material was grey *draps de dame*, made short with Turkish 'continuations,' black leather belt, tight body, buttoned in front, small white collar and white cuffs, grey hat and brown veil: in this costume, minus the hat, I entered the ball-room. Here we found the ladies seated in chairs, stuck close together all round the apartment, and each lady having a plate in her hand filled with cedar nuts, which she was occupied in cracking and eating as fast as she could; their mouths were in constant motion, though every eye was turned upon poor me, who would gladly have shrunk into one of the nutshells.

We stood talking with Colonel Keil: we were sorry to see so talented a man reduced to the position of

being obliged to make associates of such an assemblage as we met here. He said he rarely mixed with them; there were times when he was obliged to attend these gatherings; that night, on our account, he had been induced to accept the invitation. He continued, 'Not one single associate have I here, and, if you will come with me, I will show you how rationally they spend their time.' We wandered with him into other rooms, where we found the gentlemen at cards, some quarrelling over them, others drinking hard, and, again, others who had already had more than a sufficiency. 'Drink,' the Colonel said, 'I cannot; in playing cards, I take no pleasure; so I spend my time with my books, or I go alone to shoot: thus I pass my leisure hours.' I enquired if the ladies were always as silent as I now found them? 'Yes; when any of the opposite sex are present, but when alone for a short time, the noise of these men is nothing in comparison with theirs; and now they have a theme which will last for months; that is, your visit.'

Supper was served to us before the company sat down, as we were anxious to be on the road, and at eleven we took leave of the courteous Ispravonik, on our way to the military station of Sandyp.

The ascent out of the valley of the Bïa, a little above Bisk, was difficult, but we got on pretty well. The lightning, which was frequent and vivid, kept us awake, watching it during the night, so that we were enabled to observe the country we were travelling over. For some distance we found small round hills, but no vestige of wood. After this we ran along some hills overlooking the valley of the Bïa; here the scenery was

very pretty, particularly as we saw it at the dawn of day. As far as the eye could reach nothing was visible but dark pine forests, with some fine bold mountain scenery in the distance.

It was six o'clock A. M. when we reached the far post of Sandyp, which was prettily situated about a verst from the Bïa. Almost immediately after our arrival we had a fearful thunderstorm; and for our comfort we were told we should meet with them daily in the mountains. We found no one living here but Cossacks with their families.

And here we had to leave everything we could dispense with in the shape of clothing till our return, as our journey from this point was to be performed on horseback, no carriage being able to penetrate beyond. At five o'clock, the horses were ready for our departure. All the women had turned out to see me off. One old woman with tears had entreated me not to go, no lady had ever attempted the journey before. There were Kalmuk women living beyond, but they had never seen them. In the early part of the day she had offered to let her daughter go to take care of me; however, when the daughter came in, a healthy, strong girl, some thirty-five summers old, she stoutly refused (to my delight) to move; the mother tried to persuade, and did all she could, it was of no use; and I was left in peace.

We now mounted our horses, I riding *en cavalier*. I must tell you that I took from Moscow with me a beautiful saddle, which I was occupied one day in Barnaoul examining, when Colonel Sokolovsky entered. He de-

manded what I was going to do with it; my reply was, 'To ride: I cannot do so without one, and the Kalmuks, I presume, have no such things.' 'No!' said he, sarcastically, 'and they will be enchanted to see yours; but what will please them most will be the sight of an English lady sprawling on the steppes, or with a broken leg in the mountains. But,' said he, 'seriously speaking, you cannot go with such a saddle: first, the horses are not accustomed to them; and secondly, in the mountains it is quite out of the question.' He then offered me one of his own, which I accepted, and left mine till our return; and thankful am I that I did so, otherwise I should not be here to tell the tale of our narrow escapes. At times, we have had ledges of rock to ride round, where, had I had a side-saddle, my legs would have been crushed to pieces or torn off. At times, I have had to lift my feet on to the saddle, there being barely room for the horse to pass between high masses of rock. Then there were passes to ride over, formed by the granite mountains, in places quite perpendicular down to the Bïa. Our horses have stood on many points, where we could see the water boiling and foaming probably 1,000 feet below us; just imagine me on one of these places with a side-saddle!

The women followed us a short distance wishing us a pleasant journey. We had about 400 versts to travel, over mountains, through forests, and across rivers; about half a verst from Sandyp, we entered a large forest of pines; an hour's ride through it brought us to the banks of the Bïa, at this point a broad stream, and, oh! what vegetation, the grass and plants growing far above our heads, as we rode by on horseback.

That night, for the first time in my life, I had to sleep *à la belle étoile*, with my feet not ten paces from the Bïa. First a voilok (a kind of felt cloth) was spread on the ground, over that two bears' skins, so that no damp could pass through. I lay down, of course without undressing. The feeling was a strange one; sleeping in a forest, the water rippling at my feet, and surrounded by men alone.

The following morning I was up at dawn, and dabbling in the river; at six we started and rode on till dinner-time; we then took two hours' rest, and dined off most exquisite fish, caught fresh from the stream. About three, we again started forward, and continued our journey till eight in the evening. We were able to have a balagan (a sort of tent) erected for this night, so we slept more comfortably. Moreover, by hanging a sheet up at the open side of the balagan, I was enabled to undress. I now found that Mr. Atkinson had been in the habit of sleeping amongst these wandering tribes without doing so. I told him, without undressing I should soon be knocked up, and advised his following my example, which he did, and continued doing so with benefit to himself. Indeed, in the pavoska I invariably unfastened every string and button before lying down. How delighted I felt this night to stretch my weary cramped limbs! On horseback, I did not feel in the least tired; but, when I was assisted off, I could not stand for several minutes for the first two or three days. On the fourth, as I appeared to be daily growing worse, I determined to conquer this weakness; so, setting my feet firmly on the ground, and refusing

the aid of anyone, I walked; I own that for an instant I thought I should fall. After this, I never again but once experienced the feeling of weakness.

On the second morning after our departure, immediately on leaving our night's quarters, I had rather a narrow escape. We had to ascend some high granite rocks. When near the summit my horse stumbled and slipped back, placing me in rather a dangerous position; but I kept my seat and got him up; and proud enough, I can tell you, I was to have gained the admiration of the Kalmuks, because they are splendid riders, and it is satisfactory to be praised by those who are capable of judging. After travelling near fifty versts, we arrived at a Kalmuk village; here the young girls brought me plenty of fruit, and when I went to bathe (which I do three times a day, that is, when I rise in the morning, when we stop for dinner, and when we bivouac for the night), I had a whole bevy of them, all anxious to do something for me; but one of their principal objects is to handle every article of clothing they can come near.

In these quiet Kalmuk villages, far from the strife of the busy world in which we exist, are performed the same scenes, only in a ruder manner, as we witness daily around us: jealousy, love, and suicide are not unknown to these uncultivated daughters of nature. I must tell you of a singular love-scene which came under our notice, and which was nigh having a very tragic ending.

We had just concluded dinner and were preparing to depart, when we saw a young and pretty girl, with black eyes, running past us towards the Bïa, which, at

this point, runs boiling and foaming at a fearful rate over large stones. There was a look of wild anguish on her face. We then saw a man on horseback galloping after her and a number of others following. The instant she reached the stream, she leaped into the boiling flood; at the same time, tearing off her head-dress, she threw it at the man on horseback, and was instantly carried down the river at a frightful speed.

A great rush was made to save her: some men at work farther down the river put off in a small boat they had, but missed her; several jumped on horseback and galloped along the banks as hard as they could; when some distance beyond her, one of them sprang into the stream and succeeded in catching hold of her, and with much difficulty brought her ashore. The matter was then explained. An attachment had sprung up between this young girl and a youth of her own village, but he being poor had not dared to ask her in marriage of her brother, under whose guardianship she was: thus the young couple had determined to wait more prosperous days; meanwhile, a rich old man having become enamoured of her charms, and being rejected by her, applied to the brother, who gave his consent to their union; on discovering this she fled from the village and secreted herself in the one where we found her. On the morning of our arrival, her brother (the man whom we had seen on horseback) having discovered her whereabouts, had come to take her away, and by force marry her to the man she abhorred; to avoid which she preferred death by plunging into the stream. After a time she began to show symptoms of recovery, when I

sorrowfully left her, as we had a long ride before us. Although we returned this way we did not stop at this village, as we descended the river on a raft — thus we were never able to learn the fate of the young damsel so miraculously saved; no one had expected she would be taken out of the water alive.

On the following day we had, strange to say, another curious scene where we halted to dine. We found a group of men surrounding an old woman, and, a short distance from them, a group of girls assembled around a very pretty young girl about sixteen years old, who appeared quite unconcerned, and was busy cracking nuts. As soon as our party approached and they observed me, they all hastened to us, offering me nuts, some ran and gathered bilberries; the young girl with her nuts never moved away, but kept casting glances at the group of men and the old woman. I afterwards found that she was her mother, and the six men, all of various ages, were lovers and candidates for her hand, one of whom the mother thought a most desirable match.

My husband was now called upon to decide the case, whereupon he took his seat upon a piece of rock. Here the old woman and the lovers surrounded him, the talmash standing by his side to interpret. Each one pleaded his cause with much earnestness and apparently with great eloquence and fervor, but their words seemed to fall upon the ears of the maiden without effect, as she remained immovable.

One of the lovers described the impression her beauty had made upon him, another spoke of his rank, a third talked of his skill in the chase, a fourth of his strength

in case she needed defence from man or animal, a fifth of the care he would take of her in sickness as in health; but the most eloquent of all was an old man; he made a long speech; he spoke of his possessions, of the land he cultivated, of his herds of cattle, of his position as the chief of the village, and finally of the great love he bore towards the maiden; how he had watched her day by day growing up from childhood to womanhood. The old lover became greatly excited. When all had ceased speaking, the speeches were translated to Mr. Atkinson, who ordered the young girl forward, and asked her, through the medium of the interpreter, which of the suitors she preferred. Whereupon she declared, if she were allowed to choose, she should not consent to take any one of them; as none of those present pleased her. Mr. Atkinson then suggested that it would be better for her to remain with her mother till some one proposed for her more to her own liking. The lovers retired satisfied, since no one had obtained more favour than the other. The young girl thanked Mr. Atkinson by a smile, but the mother looked disappointed, as she had pleaded for the old man, whose age appeared more suited to the mother than to the daughter, he being the old woman's senior by many years.

We now had a ride through a forest of pines; the day was sultry hot, not a breath of wind penetrated the dense mass above and around us, the atmosphere was charged with electricity. I felt unable to bear up; at last (I am sure you will not credit it), I slept, ay and dreamed, sitting on my horse; my head falling heavily on one side aroused me, and this happened two or three

times before I could shake the drowsiness from my eyelids.

At a distance of twelve versts we stopped for the night, this being the only resting-place before reaching the Lake, and at nine o'clock lay down as usual under our tent. Luckily I always placed the clothes we took off under our heads to raise them, as we had only two small leathern cushions with us. In the middle of the night I awoke drenched through and through, not a dry thread on me. The rain was pouring in torrents, the thunder growling and the lightning flashing; you must know that the top of the tent was covered with *grass* only, as in this place there was no birch bark to be had, with which they are usually covered. I awoke Mr. Atkinson, who wanted to get up, but, as I then said, of what use would it have been? We had not a dry corner to go to, and, if he had put on his clothes, he would have been soaked through again in less than half an hour; so I persuaded him to lie still and try to sleep, which I can tell you was rather a hard matter, with the rain pattering down on our faces; however, I turned on my side, drew the clothes over my head, and managed, ere long, to doze off, when I slept till morning.

When we awoke, the sun had not yet risen, but we could perceive it was going to be a fine day. I then got out of bed, but it was more like turning out of a vapour bath. I shall not easily forget that night. Had the same scene taken place now, I should not have thought so much of it, but at that time I was just beginning my travels, which made it appear terrible. About a

verst from our night's encampment we found the rocks so high and abrupt, that we could not ascend; this compelled us to go round a point jutting into the river, which runs at this place over large stones, forming a great rapid. There was a narrow ledge on which the horses could go, but up to the saddle-flaps in water. The greatest care is required to pass along; once off the ledge and you are instantly in deep water, and carried away amongst the rocks to certain death. All passed safely except myself, my horse got into deeper water than was agreeable. An old Kalmuk woman who had joined our party, seeing me in this position, was fearfully alarmed and screamed out lustily; it was not the depth she feared, but my being carried out into the rapid, where I should quickly have been dashed to pieces; however, I sat quite still, until the Cossack managed to seize the bridle, and drawing my horse round, landed me in safety. It was truly a most dangerous place; my boots, which, by the way, reached above my knees, were filled with water. However, we continued our way slowly, as we had a mountain to ascend, in some parts so steep that our horses often slipped back; still we reached the summit without accident, when, oh! what a splendid view was spread out before us! Immediately under our feet ran the river Bïa, which we could see winding its course among the mountains for a long distance, like a thread of silver. Looking to the west, the mountains rose far above the snow line, their summits beautifully defined against a deep blue sky. The nearest mountains were clothed in magnificent foliage of a fine warm green, shading off into the distance with purple

and blue, whilst the foreground on which we stood was covered with the feather fern, large shrubs and long grass, equalling in luxuriance plants grown under a tropical sun.

We reached Altin Kool or the Golden Lake in the evening, just as the sun was setting. It was one of the most lovely scenes that could well be imagined; a bright sun shed its light over lake and mountain; the water was calm and shining like molten gold, in which the rocks, trees, and mountains were reflected as in a mirror, redoubling the beauty of the scene. We sat on our horses looking at this picture for a long time, enraptured by its beauty. It repaid us well for all our toils, and, when contrasted with the rugged scenes we had passed over, this was like enchantment; and still more so as I looked around, for mountains rose up on every side, with apparently no outlet: it was as if we had been dropped down from the clouds into fairy land. In the evening we crossed the lake in a small boat to a Kalmuk village; several of the houses were built of wood, and covered with birch bark: we entered some of them; they contained only the cooking utensils, with a box or two to hold the treasures of the inmates, who were, apparently, very poor. The fire was made in the centre of the room, with an aperture in the roof to allow of the smoke escaping. They presented me with a large bunch of wild onions, such as we afterwards found in abundance on the shores of the lake. These onions are consumed in large quantities by the Cossacks, as well as by these wild tribes, as are many other bulbous roots.

As we returned *home* in our boat, and when about

the middle of the lake, Mr. Atkinson, who had taken his flute with him, commenced playing an air, to the great astonishment as well as delight of our new friends. The power he thus gained over these simple-hearted people by his music was extraordinary. We travelled round the lake in small boats, it was a tour of eleven days, and in all that time he never once lost his influence; like Orpheus, he enchanted all who heard him; without a murmur they obeyed him in everything; indeed, there was often a dispute to ascertain which might do his bidding; and there was no lack of hands to spin the line which was required to sound the lake. We spent a considerable time attaching the fathom marks to it, but, unfortunately, it was never used, on account of the continued storms, one of which I shall not easily forget. We had left our first encampment at an early hour, and commenced our voyage; our party consisted, besides ourselves, of our Cossack, the talmash, and another Cossack, who had been sent forward to see that men and canoes were ready; our Kalmuk boatmen, eleven in number, were thorough wild-looking fellows, half naked. It was a lovely morning, and, as we advanced, each turn appeared to open out new beauties to our view. I was lost in admiration. About mid-day Mr. Atkinson, looking towards the west, perceived a storm was gathering, or rather, I ought to say, was following us. The Kalmuks also perceived it, and commenced pulling as hard as they could, for you must understand that for many versts the rocks rise abruptly from the water, affording no shelter whatever; it was a distance of ten versts they had to pull ere we could land, and they told

us that, if caught in one of these storms, so frequently met with here, nothing could save us. At length we reached a small mountain torrent, with a little headland jutting out; having rounded this they ran the canoes ashore, and hurrying us out dragged them high out of the water; then we all hastened up to some trees, thinking they would afford us shelter from the coming storm; but, ere we reached them, it had given us a thorough drenching.

We now looked round to examine our position, and found we were landed on a mass of rocks and earth, brought down by the torrent, on which cedar-trees of a great size were growing; under one of these we now stood; about twenty paces from us rose up a high rock, perhaps two thousand feet, with trees growing on every ledge or crevice where they could take root. Turning westward the effect was awfully grand: the clouds were rolling on in black masses, covering the craggy summits near us in darkness, while, above these, white clouds were rolling and curling like steam from some mighty cauldron. The thunder was yet distant, but the wind was heard approaching with a noise like the roaring of the sea in a great tempest. On looking down the lake the effect was truly grand; the water, which, ten minutes before, was calm and reflecting everything like a mirror, was now one sheet of white foam, driven along like snow or sleet. We now perceived that, had we been caught in this, our canoes could not have withstood it, but would have gone down instantly.

The storm now appeared to be concentrated over our heads, and drove us farther into the woods for shelter;

where we took up our station under a large tree: the lightning began to descend in thick streams, tinging everything with red, when almost immediately we heard the crash of a large tree struck down not far from us, while the thunder rolled over our heads in one continued roar; the echo of one peal had not died away before another came. I could not forbear exclaiming, 'Now, for the first time, I understand that passage in Byron where he says,

> 'Far along,
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the *live* thunder. Not from one lone cloud,
> But every mountain now hath found a tongue.'

The storm continued for more than an hour, then all was calm and sunny. I had never in my life before seen a real storm; this was the first, and though I have seen, and been caught in many a one since, for we met with them daily while on this lake, none ever made the same impression on me; it was awfully grand, and never to be forgotten.

We were not over well supplied with provisions on our voyage round the lake; there were only about two villages, and those on the opposite side to where we were; and even in these villages there was not much to be had, the people were so very poor; we had therefore to depend entirely on the produce of the gun; and, game not being abundant, we were obliged to take what we could get, which was very often a species of crow, extremely disagreeable, hunger alone enabling us to eat them.

On stopping one evening, the Kalmuks said there was

a village on the opposite side of the lake; we therefore despatched a Cossack and men for one of their goats, the only animals they reared. I had then an opportunity of judging of the distance across, Mr. Atkinson having told me it was from twelve to fifteen versts to the opposite side—a fact I could scarcely credit. The distances, on account of the purity of the atmosphere, are so very deceptive, and I have more than once had occasion to remark the accuracy of Mr. Atkinson's judgment in these matters, and also with regard to the weather, for he in a short time far surpassed the men who had lived the whole of their lives in these regions, though they are excellent judges of it. Rarely has a Cossack the slightest idea of anything of the kind, for when the question is put to one of them as to what weather we shall have, the answer invariably is, 'Bogh Yevo znai!' (God knows). If you put the same question to any of the tribes met with in these regions, they usually cast their eyes around them before replying, and their answers were generally right; but I never knew my husband to fail in his judgment.

Darkness had shrouded every object from view ere the men returned, but it was not long before the cauldrons were doing duty over the blazing fires. We went for a short walk along the shore; on returning, and as we drew near our bivouac, one of the wildest scenes I had ever witnessed came into view. Three enormous fires piled high were blazing brightly. Our Kalmuk boatmen and Cossacks were seated around them, the lurid light shone upon their faces and upon the trees above, giving the men the appearance of

ferocious savages; in the foreground was our little leafy dwelling, with its fire burning calmly but cheerfully in front of it.

I must not forget to tell you that I one day shot a squirrel. I have learned to shoot pretty well, an exercise I was obliged to practise in case of an attack. I have the small rifle Mr. Tate gave me, also a shot-gun, presented to me by Mr. Astershoff whilst in Tomsk, and in my saddle I have a pair of pistols; so you see I am well armed. I saw the squirrel in the tree, and having my rifle in my hand, I raised it and shot at him; one of the Kalmuks standing by me was greatly pleased, patted me on the back, and ran down the bank to bring it; I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw it, for I had imagined it was trying to escape. I had never shot at anything before but the target. The poor fellow came and begged of me, as a favour, that I would allow him to have it for his supper, which request was granted, on condition that the skin should be mine. These people seem not to care what they eat; whenever Mr. Atkinson shot a lynx, they always consumed it.

I gained great renown from shooting the squirrel; to say truth, I was so elated about it myself, that I formed the absurd notion of shooting a bear which had, during the night, visited our camp, but without disturbing anybody, having walked within four feet of where we were sleeping, as was evident by the traces he had left behind him. The following morning the whole party, with the exception of one man, started off to seek something for dinner, when the notion entered my head, that perhaps

the bear might return; so, taking down my rifle, I placed a cap on it in readiness, and laid it near me, rejoicing in the idea of the surprise all would exhibit at seeing the bear lying by me on their return to camp; but, to my chagrin, the monster never made his appearance. The Kalmuk who was left behind was perfectly amazed when, on asking me what I was going to do with my rifle, I answered, to shoot the bear when he came.

Whilst at the head of the lake, we had a visit from some ferocious-looking fellows, although they were only Kalmuks. It was night when they arrived; there were about twenty, and, when seated around the blazing fires,—with their arms slipped out of their fur coats, which were hanging loosely around them, leaving the upper part of their greasy muscular and brawny bodies perfectly naked, and nearly black from exposure to the air and sun, and with pigtails, like those of the Chinese,—their aspect was most fierce; and still more so, when they all commenced quarreling about a few ribbons and pieces of silk I had given to our men. They had tied strips of red around their necks; but I satisfied all parties, as I thought, by giving some to the new comers; it did appear very ridiculous to see these great strong men taking delight in things which would only have given pleasure to a child at home. And yet I do not know whether we ought to look upon their doing this with contempt; how many men in a civilised country take pride in adorning their persons with the view of looking fine, and these simple creatures were doing the same, only in a ruder manner! Still the

quarreling continued, and then it turned out that the fellows were drunk. We had much difficulty in getting rid of them, and not until near midnight did they take their departure.

These poor men are hardly dealt with, having to pay tribute to two emperors, the Chinese as well as the Russian. They are extremely good-natured. Whenever they saw me attempting to climb the rocks in search of flowers or fruit, they would ascend most difficult places to procure them for me. Once when in the boat I saw some china-asters growing out of a cleft of the rock, where I supposed it was impossible to reach them; but one of the canoes paddled to the side and a man clambered up, hanging on to branches growing out of the rocks—it was frightful to see him clinging to such slender twigs. Whenever Mr. Atkinson was busy, and I marched off in search of flowers or fruit, our Cossack Alexae, a giant of a man, always thought it a duty incumbent on him to follow me at a respectful distance wherever I went, and, when not able to go himself, he sent a Kalmuk with me.

Mr. Atkinson was occupied one day sketching a magnificent waterfall in a recess of the Kara-Korum mountain; beautiful and hot as the day was, here we found ice and snow; indeed, we found snow in many of the ravines as we ascended this side of the lake. Under all this mass of rocks, snow, and ice, the water passes into the lake, and amongst this accumulation, perhaps of ages, were growing, here and there, bushes of red currants. All the men as well as myself commenced gathering the delicious berries. As I wandered on, I

observed some bushes where the fruit was hanging in tempting clusters, but to reach it I had to cross an abominable spot of slush and ice. I was standing, deliberating whether I ought to cross or not, and whether it was worth the dirtying of my boots, when I felt myself gently lifted over. I turned round, presuming it was my husband, but no! there was Alexae wandering off in another direction; I ungenerously felt a little indignant, for I had made the remark to my husband that he always treated me as a child, and this act was a confirmation of my impression.

On our return voyage we crossed to the north side, where it was nearly bare of wood and vegetation: here we found several caverns; one was pointed out to us where some of these poor fellows had lain down to rest for the night, and where a large mass of rock had fallen and buried them; not returning to their homes, their comrades sought them, visiting each resting-place they were accustomed to stop at; when, on arriving at this one, there was no longer any doubt as to the fate of their companions.

Farther on we entered one of these caves to dine; it was a lovely spot, but after having dined, and my husband had finished sketching the place, a storm arose, and lasted till near dusk; being late, the men suggested our passing the night here, but to this proposal I strongly objected; no persuasions could induce me to stop; it was only a few hours before that they had shuddered, when passing the cavern where their companions had met with so sad a fate, and here I shuddered at the idea of stopping in a similar place.

We spent a happy time on this our voyage round the lake; in years to come, if we are spared, how many a pleasant hour we shall pass in recalling to mind these times! Even now, as I glance at the sketches, each one has a tale to tell of joy, or dangers escaped.

As we returned to the spot whence we had started, to commence our voyage round the lake, it was with a feeling of regret; for some time we had seen the storm gathering, and now, instead of the placid golden lake without a ruffle, that had gladdened us on our arrival, the water was black as ink, and the waves rose to a great height, making a tremendous noise as they lashed with fury against the rocks. I was sorry, and still this was grand to look upon—beauty of a different character.

At this spot we found some most delicious fish, about the size of a herring, only more exquisite in flavour; indeed, I nowhere tasted anything to compare with them. We salted a barrel of them, and sent them by one of the Cossacks, who was returning to Barnaoul, to Colonel Sokolovsky.

We now bade adieu to the lake, and at forty versts from it we had a raft made, on which we descended the Bïa to Sandyp, making an agreeable variation to our former route; besides which, we had an opportunity of seeing the fine bold scenery of this river.

My friend, the old woman of Sandyp, on hearing we were proceeding to Kopal, came to me, and kneeling down, bowed her forehead to the ground, saying, 'Matooshka moi' (mother of mine), 'pardon me, I have a great boon to ask of you.' I raised her, but she was down again in a minute. At length, with the tears

trickling fast, she told me she had a son in Kopal, related to me the miserable condition they were in, with not a house to shelter them, and little besides their bread to eat; whilst at Sandyp they had no want. She concluded by begging of me to carry him a gastenitz, 'a present;' I naturally consented, but, oh horror! she gave me sufficient to load a camel; at last we got it reduced to a parcel, containing I do not know what, besides a tub of honey and some wax. The old lady made me smile by saying I must not let any of the Cossacks know it was not mine, otherwise there would be none left by the time we reached Kopal. I could not then comprehend her meaning, but since I have fully understood it.

We have had many Cossacks in our service, but never found them otherwise than willing, trustworthy men; without asking, they would not have taken a pin belonging to us; they might have been trusted with untold gold; but not so with regard to those who were not under their care and protection, they would then take the first thing they could lay their hands on.

I was once told by a Cossack officer that their pay was inadequate to their wants, it was really insufficient to purchase a uniform, 'and yet,' said he, 'we are expected to have it always good, and, besides, we must have a horse; so what are we to do? why, steal one.' To my knowledge it is not alone horses but other things likewise. At one time we used to consider their conduct very reprehensible, but after becoming acquainted with all their means, we were much more lenient in blaming them; it is the system which is defective.

The soldiers are quite a different race of men. We never had but two, and both of them thieves; they could not be trusted with anything, and besides which, their appearance is against them; they are a low class of individuals, whereas the Cossack is a gentleman, and most of them educated men.

We had much trouble with the old lady's honey, from its oozing out of the tub. Here the honey is perfectly pure and transparent, and can be poured out like oil; the scent of it is exquisite, and it tasted of almost every flower we met with in the Altai; not a cottage we stopped at but a plate of it was brought to us. Bees are kept by every cottager, and in some places in the Altai we found wild bees; the Cossacks often used to get their honey. The tub of honey at last reached Kopal. When we asked for the man, three came all of the same name; it was delivered with the parcel, &c., to one who was from Sandyp. About a couple of hours afterwards a Cassock, quite breathless from running, made his appearance, saying he was the person to whom the articles belonged, he had received a letter saying they were coming; I was glad afterwards to hear that he got everything but his honey; that, unfortunately, was nearly all consumed by the Philistines who had taken possession of it. It was vexatious after all my care about it, but the poor fellow was quite consoled by hearing news from home; there were so many comrades he had to ask after, of whom I knew nothing. I did my best in giving him all the information I could, and he appeared satisfied.

From Sandyp we had started without a day's rest to the

Katoonia; again I made near 1,000 versts on horseback. This journey occupied three weeks, on account of the sketching. Parts of the road were really frightful! I have ridden over mountains far above the line of vegetation; one we crossed near the river Koksa is well impressed on my mind. We left our camp before six in the morning, and at one halted for dinner, and about half-past two again started forward. The way was beautiful but exceedingly rugged; we appeared to be travelling over a number of plateaus, for crest after crest was reached, and on arriving at each I always expected it was the last; but still the same difficulties lay before us, another plateau and another crest; but when we did arrive at the highest point, what a scene lay before us! There stood the Bielouka in all his majesty, the sun was just shedding his last rays on this giant of the Altai, he appeared to stand out so proudly from all the surrounding mountains, looking like a ruby encircled by diamonds, into which his colour was slightly reflected. I was lost in admiration at the beauty of the scene, even the men drew up their horses and gazed at the spectacle, exclaiming 'slavonie' (glorious). We stood watching the sight for some moments, till aroused by Alexae, saying we must forward.

This day we had to pass round a point where but one horse at a time could go. To our right, the rocks rose up perpendicularly, while to our left was a fearful abyss, down which, I know, few would like to gaze, and where rocks were strewn about in wild confusion; one false step of the horse would have hurled both him and his rider into the awful depth below. One of the

Kalmuks wished to blind my eyes, and lead my horse by his bridle, but I would not consent to the arrangement, nor even allow anyone to touch my horse. I had learned from experience that where there is danger, it was ever better to trust to the sagacity of the animals, who appear to have a full knowledge of the difficulties they encounter. At times you see them place the foot and try whether all is safe; if not, they go to another place; and what hardy animals they are! none of them are shod — everything is nature here.

We now commenced the descent, which was far worse than the ascent. Rocks were strewn about in all directions, making it difficult to proceed; at last, about dusk, we reached a plateau, where the men desired to stop the night; but, as Alexae said it was not a very great distance to the foot of the mountain, we consented to proceed, thinking the men would be more comfortable, although I would gladly have stopped; we now continued descending, each step becoming worse. When night set in, we found we must still proceed, as there was not a foot of ground on which to encamp. Moreover, the pass became so narrow, that we had to go in single file; the leader, then Mr. Atkinson, and I following, the men bringing up the rear. For some time we had heard the roaring of the water to our right, it now became deafening, carrying with it stones and rocks. The men had been continually calling out to us to keep to the left; now their voices, from the terrific noise of the fall, could no longer be heard, so with a beating heart I stooped forward on my horse, trying to penetrate the gloom. I now and then caught

a faint glimpse of my husband's white steed, so that I knew I was following in the right track. I gave my horse the reins and trusted to him to carry me safely. I found it useless for me even to attempt to guide him.

After some weary hours of expectation, we arrived safely at the bottom of the pass, and proceeded on level ground, but it was eleven o'clock ere we reached the village of Kokshinska.

I had been so many hours on my horse, and had passed over such frightfully difficult roads, that when we stopped, I was actually obliged to be led, for I could not stand, my limbs were so benumbed. After lying on the bench in the cottage for a few seconds, I recovered. There was no possibility of giving way to fatigue on this journey; I had all kinds of duties to perform. The next day, after bathing, I was all right again. I have generally been able to bathe every morning and evening this summer, and sometimes in the middle of the day; without doing so, I do not believe I should have accomplished the journey half as well.

As I was sitting breakfasting the following morning, I observed one of the peasant girls running as hard as she could; breathlessly she came into the room to gaze at the wild animals, who, by arriving the evening before, had raised such a commotion in their peaceful valley. I spoke to her, but, receiving no answer, went on with my breakfast. After standing there upwards of half-an-hour, I wished to get rid of her, as she had nothing to say, so gave her some beads for a necklace. I had a goodly supply of these articles with me; but it was no use, go she would not. After having critically examined

me, she at length spoke, saying, 'They tell me you came down that mountain last night,' pointing in the direction whence we had come; 'is it true?' I answered 'Yes!' After again looking at me some time, she said, 'Ne oojalee pravda' (it surely is not true); 'why, we look at that mountain with dread in the daytime, and *you*, you came down at night!' and again she stared as though her eyes would start from their sockets, and with more astonishment than before, and repeating, 'but *is* it true?'

Here I had no lack of willing attendants; they had never had a visit from one of their own countrywomen, but an Englishwoman was an object they had no conception of. Then the questions that were put to me would fill volumes; amongst the rest, the never-ending theme, had I ever seen the emperor? Yes, many times, but never spoken to him. Then the grand duchesses, what were they like; were they pretty? It was glorious news to tell them that the Grand Duchess Olga was married. I had to give a description of how they dressed, and what ornaments they wore, and how the hair was decorated; and said one of my new friends, now she is married, she wears a platock (a handkerchief) on her head. I had some difficulty in keeping my countenance, but I thoroughly shocked them by saying the daughter of an emperor never wore a handkerchief on her head, either before or after marriage. Indeed, I am not sure whether the Imperial family have gained in the estimation of their worshippers by my visit. They are looked upon as something divine by these simple-minded but kind-hearted people.

What greatly astonished me was the uncleanly habits of these inhabitants of one of the most lovely valleys to be found in the world. They are surrounded with every comfort they can desire; and a pure crystal stream running close to their dwellings, and yet they are swarming with vermin of a most disgusting character! I always prefer sleeping in the open air, the animals which crawl over me there are all clean in comparison to those we meet with in the dirty cottages, and still not dirty to look at; on the contrary, the walls, tables, and floors are daintily clean and white.

It was our intention to have gone to the Bielouka; men, horses, and provisions had been prepared at Ouemonia for that purpose, but after a sojourn of a few days in the mountains, on the morning of the 3rd, my husband was obliged reluctantly to turn his horse's head, but with a determination to return at some future period. I would gladly have accompanied him had he determined to go on, but I was rejoiced when he said we must not proceed farther; we had travelled over versts of morass, our horses sinking up to their saddle-flaps, and at night encamping on the snowy mountains, with a bleak cutting wind penetrating to the very bones. In the morning we found the snow had fallen so thick, that the men were invisible; they were lying on the ground covered in their shubes near the camp fire, which, in spite of the falling snow, was burning brightly. The poor fellows looked like a number of mounds placed around the fire to keep it from being swept away by the wind. They told me the snow kept them warm, the wind being unable to penetrate. As we rode along that

day we looked like a band of wandering spirits clothed in pure white, riding on horses with black legs. Had we been here one month earlier we could have accomplished the journey, but the middle of August was far too late, even a fortnight earlier it might have been done; had we persisted in continuing, we might all have perished.

On our descent to the Katoonia we found various kinds of delicious fruit; the raspberries were so large that one could not be placed in the mouth at once; we had black and red currants in abundance — there are two kinds of the latter. I was never able to distinguish them in appearance, they were so much alike, but our men recognised them immediately; one was called what it really was, 'the sour.'

We encamped on a pretty spot on the shores of the Katoonia. What a change from our prospects in the mountains! Here all was sunshine, and a genial warmth seemed to spread itself over the whole frame.

We were much annoyed by the mosquitoes, as likewise a small fly, very bright and green in the sun; it was exceedingly venomous, for one settling on Mr. Atkinson's hand it bit him severely, and his hand was painful for many days after.

We descended the river in a boat; it was rather a dangerous experiment over the falls. A Russian guided the little canoe, which he managed with great dexterity. When once started we proceeded with terrific rapidity, and on landing he looked at us with pride to think he had carried us so safely. He said not another man besides himself would have ventured: this was confirmed by the people in the village. We returned to Altai

Volost by another route from that by which we came. It was there we had left our pavoska. We now crossed the pretty, quiet Yabagan steppe; we stopped at a Kalmuk aoul, where a sacrifice had been offered up. The feast was nearly ready, when Mr. Atkinson put an end to their mirth by proceeding to sketch the priest. Before leaving the old man took up his tambourine, and beating loudly on it offered up a prayer, as he said, for a safe journey back to our native land, but I declared that it was a thanksgiving that we were leaving. The poor fellow had a perfect horror at being sketched, thinking that Mr. Atkinson would ever afterwards have power over him.

We had with us on this journey to the Katoonia an old Talmash, who told us we were coming to streams where there was an abundance of fish, and causing us to stop earlier than we should otherwise have done; but we soon found the old man out. At last he came to the conclusion that great changes had taken place in the world since he had last travelled this way. To make amends for the disappointment about fish he would seek for fruit and flowers to please me, but Alexae put an end to this one day. Before reaching the Abbaye steppe, he had gathered me a large branch of currants, which I was occupied eating, when Alexae rode up, and giving the poor old Talmash a severe lecture on his stupidity in *indulging* me as he had done, turned to me and said, 'Throw that branch away immediately.' I was indignant; seeing the colour mount to my cheeks, he said (I presume thinking I was a spoiled child), 'You shall have as much as you can eat when we arrive at

the old man's on the Abbaye steppe.' I could not help smiling. He continued—'We have a mountain to cross, and if the storm overtakes us we shall all be lost, for the clouds are low on the mountains.' I at last, thinking he might be right, threw my branch of delicious berries away, and rode on to join my husband.

We started in the morning, hoping to have a fine day, but the rain, which had indulged us in a bath for the last two or three days, commenced pouring in torrents. We were on the ascent the whole morning; at length the path became difficult, and the summit was not reached till late in the day, and then what Alexae had foreseen came upon us — we were enveloped in the thick clouds. It was singular to me, as this was the first time I had ever been in them. I could scarcely see my horse's head. They passed by us like thick smoke, and glad enough was I when we came to the descent and got below them; I looked back and saw them rolling on in masses. On arriving at the old man's solitary dwelling in the Abbaye steppe, it was arranged that we should spend the night there, but recollecting the horrors I had met with at Kokshinska, I felt a little chary about the matter; notwithstanding the pouring rain, I would much rather have encamped outside.

I had not got my hat off before Alexae appeared in the room bringing me a large soup-plate of preserves and a wooden spoon, when, placing it before me, said, 'There's for thee, now thou mayst eat,' but I was too busy getting my wet things off, I had not a dry thread on me. The most extraordinary thing is, that, with all the wetting I get, I never take cold.

As we had to be up at an early hour the following morning, I made the bed and lay down to rest before nine. Sleep is never long in overtaking the tired travellers. How long I lay I cannot tell, but weary as I was I was awoke by a horrid sensation on my body. I struck a light to see what it was, when, oh! horrible, my night-dress and the sheets were one black mass of *bugs*. For a second I scarcely knew what to do; however, I commenced sweeping the invaders off by hundreds, I might say thousands.

At last we cleared the place of the disturbers of our rest. I had just dropped off to sleep when I was again awoke by the same stinging sensation, and the same ceremony had to be gone through. An old coat I had thrown on to the foot of the bed was literally so swarmed with the nasty insects, that I opened the door and thrust it outside in despair. I was then obliged to keep a candle (the only one I had) burning to enable me to continue my wholesale warfare. I greeted the first streak of light with great pleasure, tired though I was. When the old hunter entered our room he asked with a profound bow how we had passed the night. When I told him he calmly said, 'Ah! they never trouble us; I suppose we are accustomed to them.'

In the early morning we bade adieu to our old friend. He begged of my husband to present a petition he had had drawn up to the governor of Tomsk, praying that he might be allowed to change his residence and build himself a cottage in another valley, where he desired to grow corn. We were glad to be of a little service to the old man for his kindness and attention to us both in going and returning from the Katoonia.

On this journey Alexae adopted a singular method of procuring horses. Whenever we required them to be changed he sent a man forward to the tribe he sought with his cap, which was mounted on a long stick or branch, and this was held aloft, the man riding at full speed; it never failed to procure the animals, as we always found them ready on our arrival. I asked him why he did this? His reply was, that Cossacks ever travelled in the service of the Emperor, or with those under the immediate protection of His Majesty. We have often had occasion to observe the attachment of these wild tribes to His Majesty, but it rarely happens that their devotion is not abused.

The furs which are collected as tribute are of the finest kind which can be procured, and are really of great value, these poor men imagining that they are received by His Majesty in person, and that he knows whence and whom they came from. These furs pass through the hands of many individuals, and each one substitutes another of an inferior quality, so that when they arrive at their destination they are of a very different value to those given by these simple people, who would scorn to present such miserable articles to His Majesty.

The moon had long risen ere we reached the hospitable Tartar's dwelling, seven versts from Altai Volost, where we had dined on our way to the mountains. It was past ten o'clock; the good people were in bed and asleep, but they were soon roused up, and tea forthcoming. When Alexae brought it in, I enquired if the men had anything to eat? He said they were all asleep, being too tired, although they had had nothing since two o'clock, and, continued he, with a look of pity, 'you must

be very tired.' I said 'No; indeed I am not.' 'Well,' said he, with astonishment, 'we are men, and accustomed to riding, and you are not; there is not another lady could have done what you have done! And, now that the journey is over, I must tell you I have often wondered how you could go through all you have gone through.' This was sincere praise, and I can assure you I felt not a little proud to have merited it.

The following morning, August 26th, we reached Altai Volost, and then started in the pavoska for Zmeinogorsk, where we stayed four days at the house of Colonel Gerngrose, the director of the silver smelting works; he was a former acquaintance of my husband's, and for the first time since my departure from Barnaoul I slept in a bed. Oh! what a luxury it seemed to be, and how I enjoyed it.

The journey from Altai Volost was not very interesting, and, moreover, it was rendered worse by bad horses. We arrived at Kolyvan Lake just as the sun was rising; I felt anxious to see it, having heard so much about it. I was greatly disappointed; had I seen it before Altin-kool, I should most probably have admired it. It was pretty, and rendered more so by the rising sun, beautiful I could not call it.

I visited the silver smelting works, which Mr. Atkinson sketched, and has since painted this picture for me, which I hope you will see. As we were going along the road to the Zavod, I remarked the cottages of the workmen, one of which Mr. Gerngrose drew my attention to. He was accustomed, the last thing at night, to visit the Zavod. Returning home one bitter cold even-

ing, he heard a low moaning, which he fancied came from one of the cottages; he stopped the driver and listened; but hearing nothing further, he concluded it must be the wind, and went home; but the following morning they came to tell him that a murder had been committed. Our friend always felt it was a reproach on his conscience; had he got out of his sledge and gone to the cottage, he might have saved the poor woman's life, who had come to an untimely end for the sake of a little money which she had amassed. Such things are not of frequent occurrence. To prove the character of the people, I must tell you, that not until after that circumstance did they ever have the slightest fastening to their houses; indeed, even now, during the day, anyone may enter any of the dwellings, it is only at night that locks are used.

And in Barnaoul it is exactly the same thing. Colonel Kavanka told me that some short time since there was not a lock on any of his doors, he had never lost the least thing from his place, people went in and out whenever they pleased; but now it is different, the thieves are hardy enough to enter dwellings, and walk away with the shubes. One lady in Barnaoul lost three whilst we were there, and they are rather costly. In Petersburg we are satisfied to have our cloaks lined with fox skins and the collar sable, but the Siberian ladies have them lined with sables; picture to your mind the cost of a cloak, sables inside and silk velvet out. It is evident there is no lack of money in Siberia.

On Thursday, September 2nd, all being ready, we again bade adieu to kind friends, and started for Semi-

polatinsk. There the police-master took us to see the different Tartar merchants; they showed us many beautiful things from China. Then we visited a Tartar school for girls; there were about twenty of them sitting under a covered balcony, reading in a sing-song tone of voice. What struck me particularly was that great pains was bestowed on the children's nails; they are very long, and died pink.

We now crossed the Irtisch, *en route* for the great Kirghis Steppe, but before doing so the custom-house officers examined our carriage, and then went to see us across. This was a work of time: first, we crossed to an island, and then men dragged the carriage over to another ferry-boat. Altgether we were two hours. Having got clear of the Tartar village, we had the steppe before us, over which we must travel. We had now Cossack horses, a Cossack driver, and two Cossacks as a convoy, they riding on each side of the carriage; we were no sooner out of the village, than they started at full speed.

There was a fine storm of thunder, lightning, and hail among the hills, but we were galloping fast away from it. We have since heard that much damage was done by the hail, that even cattle were killed.

We had a difficult journey to Aiagooz, the rain rendering the roads almost impassable; at times, it required eight horses to drag us out of bogs we got into. On arriving at Aiagooz we found the commander absent; but we took possession of a room in the house of the sessedatal.* Aiagooz is a fortress, but now with-

* Magistrate.

out guns; the little river of the same name is a clear stream, running over large stones; on its banks long grass, reeds, and bushes grow, but no large trees.

We slept this night soundly, and the following morning were up at an early hour to make preparations for crossing the steppe. It was a busy scene we beheld from our windows. The Cossacks were moving about in every direction, and the Kirghis who were to accompany us were waiting outside, with the horses and camels, to carry us and our packages across the desolate steppes. What wild-looking fellows they appeared, but with a great deal of good nature in the countenance; their Asiatic costume is exceedingly picturesque, and beautiful, the shawls tied round their waists are by no means to be despised. The gait of these men is very singular, the bodies appearing too heavy for the legs; this is occasioned by the number of kalats each individual wears, they sometimes having as many as four or five on at a time; the boots likewise are much too short for the foot, the heel is seen protruding part of the way up the leg of the boot. Altogether they have an ungainly, rolling walk.

All was bustle and confusion, for the Cossacks, who were to accompany us to Kopal, entered to assist in the work of packing. Some of the good ladies of the place also entered, and advised, before completing our arrangements, that we should discuss the journey over a cup of tea, feeling assured they would be able to show the impossibility of my continuing it; they had heard of the great horrors and miseries endured by some of the wives of the Cossacks who had but lately

crossed the steppe with their families on their way to the new fortress. They were convinced I should die ere I reached the place. I laughed at their fears, and assured them that it would cause me much anxiety to be left behind, and, even though they told me that death would be my lot if I went, still I was firm to my purpose. You know I am not easily intimidated when once I have made up my mind. I started on this journey, with the intention of accompanying my husband wherever he went, and no idle fears shall turn me; if he is able to accomplish it, so shall I be. I give in to no one for endurance.

To Aiagooz we had travelled in the pavoska, which we left in the care of the sessedatal till our return, as we had to take to the saddle again till we reached Kopal, where we now are. This journey was very different to the others I had taken on horseback, being nearly all steppe.

Whilst the men were loading the camels, I was forced to go and take leave of my new acquaintance, even though I had passed but one night in the place. It would be considered an act of the greatest unpoliteness to quit it without calling to take leave of each individual who had shown me the slightest civility.

The first house I entered I found two ladies in close communication; from the few words I heard, it was evident I was the subject of their conversation. The hostess immediately rose to receive me, but the other lady took immediate flight, to prepare, as I afterwards found, for my reception. At her house tea and coffee were both on the table, the latter a great luxury; it is both expensive, and difficult of being procured.

Each one had prepared something for my comfort across these inhospitable steppes, in case of my determination to proceed; one had a bag of succarees (bread) cut in slices, with salt sprinkled on the top, and dried in an oven; another had sundry little meat pies; and the sessedatal, in whose house we were staying, presented me with an enormous water melon: this was a rare gift, it having been brought a long distance, none are obtainable nearer than Semipolatinsk. Unfortunately, I am no amateur of these melons; nevertheless, I accepted it, as I believed it would probably prove a great boon to Mr. Atkinson, he being but an indifferent water-drinker, whereas I can ever quench my thirst when there is a river or stream of any kind to be found, and I always carry a small drinking-cup in my pocket.

The ladies not having succeeded in detaining me, assisted me into my saddle; and bidding adieu to all, we started on our road across the plain. When a little way off I pulled up my horse, and turned to take a last look of the good folks of Aiagooz; there was a great waving of caps and handkerchiefs. Having returned their salutations, we turned our horses' heads, and rode off at a rapid pace. Having ridden some four hours, we came upon a Kirghis aoul, which I stooped to look at with no small wonder. Two Tartar women, mother and daughter, both well dressed, came out of one of the principal yourts to look at us. The younger one was a very pretty girl, with large black eyes; she excited both my interest and curiosity. Her dress was composed of striped silk of various colours, in form like a dressing-gown, and tied round the waist with a mag-

nificent shawl; she had on black velvet trousers and boots, her hair was braided into a multitude of plaits, each one of which was ornamented with coins of various kinds, silver and copper, some even of gold: thus the young lady carried her fortune about with her; unwillingly I was forced to take my leave of the damsel, as the aoul where we should pass the night was yet distant.

On arriving at our destination, what a scene burst upon my view! Herds of cattle were seen in every direction, men and boys on horseback engaged driving them towards the aoul, and a still stranger sight, women busy milking the sheep. The chief came forward to welcome us, and introduce us to the dwelling which had been prepared for our reception. The leader of our party had ridden on in advance, so as to have all ready on our arrival. The yourt had been placed on clean grass by the side of a stream, and inside the floor, or rather ground, was covered with magnificent Bokharian carpets. And here I was to pass the night: it was perfectly luxurious. Our packages were placed around the tent, and whilst tea was preparing, I spread my bearskins and made my arrangements for the night. Happening to raise my eyes from the occupation on which I was intently bent, I perceived the voilok was raised slightly round the yourt, and there was a perfect gallery of portraits; faces were peering under in every direction. Finding they were not driven off, several of them scrambled under and penetrated into the tent, touching and handling everything within their reach; but the instant the Cossack made his appearance at the door with the somesvar, there was a terrible scudding

on all sides to make an escape. The women hold these men in great dread, but from what cause I could not ascertain.

Tea being ready, we sat down to partake of the refreshing beverage; amongst the Kirghis it is not accompanied by bread and butter as with us, but by dried fruits, served up on magnificent china plates. Whilst partaking of this meal, I perceived a poor little lamb being dragged between the legs of a wild-looking fellow towards our yourt; before taking the life of the animal it was brought to us to know whether we considered its appearance quite satisfactory, if not, it would be set free and another chosen. The moment the animal is slaughtered, it is immediately dressed for the pot, in the same manner as the Kalmuks. I perceived the cauldron was already placed over the fire, which was burning brightly, to receive the almost living animal; many anxious faces were sitting around contemplating the preparations for the coming feast.

Not desiring to be present during these culinary operations, which, from experience, I knew were not of the most dainty description, we proceeded, meanwhile, to take a walk along the banks of the stream, for more than a verst, till we came to a mound, composed entirely of small stones, none larger than a walnut. Probably beneath this mound reposed the remains of some mighty chief. We stood examining the spot for some time, speculating on the kind of death he might have died, and who the occupant might be who rested there. We made enquiries respecting the mound we had just visited, and learned, as we had already sur-

mised, that it was an ancient tomb, but what people rested beneath they had no idea.

Arrived at our temporary abode, we not unwillingly took our seats on the carpet, and with our medicine-chest for a table, partook of the exquisitely tender viand placed before us; but somehow my thoughts would wander to that dear little black lamb. We had a number of visitors, who came to watch our mode of eating. Our slightest movements seemed to interest them; they looked at us with scrutinising glances. The tin plates, the spoons, knives, forks, indeed nothing escaped them; but what struck them most with astonishment was the attention paid me by Mr. Atkinson, as our sex is looked upon by the Kirghis as so much inferior to the 'lords of the creation.' It was now our turn to go forth and watch the Kirghis supping. The banquet was held in the open air; they were sitting in circles, the inner one being occupied by the chief and his followers. Alas! *no* wife sat near him; she, poor woman, was amongst the *outcasts*. There were neither plates nor knives employed here, the meat was placed on a board, and each helped himself according to his rank, the remaining portion being passed to the *outcasts*, whilst the inner circle commenced drinking from small bowls the liquor in which the meat had been boiled. This being ended, koumis was brought, accompanied by the pipes; and as we had to rise early, and the shades of night were drawing on apace, we retired to our yourt. I found the yourt preferable to a tent, being both warmer and snugger, and, a greater luxury still, I was able to dress and undress without being

obliged to kneel, as I had to do in the balagan. As you may easily imagine, I slept soundly, having already been two months travelling continually, and the principal part of the time on horseback.

Ere the sun had risen, I was awoke by busy sounds outside. The voices of men and women coupled with the barking of dogs, the neighing of the horses, the lowing of the cows and oxen, and the bleating of the sheep, were sounds so new to my ear, that I hastily jumped to my feet to take a peep at what was going forward, but I was glad to return to my furs, as the morning was cold, there being a sharp frost, the first we had had. As there was no time to be lost, I had to hasten my toilet and packages, so as to be on our way shortly after sunrise.

Before starting, our host entered the yourt to thank us for having honoured his aoul by passing the night there. He had one of his people following him with a long Bokharian carpet, which he presented to me as a souvenir of my visit. I gave him in return a knife, with which he appeared greatly pleased.

We now started forward, our party consisting of ourselves, our three Cossacks and five Kirghis, with our host and his attendants, who intended conducting us part of the way. I was much interested with our road this day; there was a succession of the same mounds we had come upon the evening before. At a distance the stones appeared in colour of a purple grey, but on a nearer inspection they were of a deep burnt sienna, and some were a deep green. We now approached some rising ground, which afforded an extensive view all around; it was desolate in the extreme, neither tree nor bush, nor

any sign of vegetable life, nothing but an arid waste. To the west lay the lake Yak-she-kessil-tooz, shining like silver. Our road was to the eastward, whither we directed our course.

After a ride of several hours, we came upon a small isolated hill, on which were several tombs, some of considerable size, built of stone, containing large chambers; these tombs appeared to be of very ancient date, and the stone must have been brought from a great distance, as none was to be found anywhere near the spot.

We rode far, and, ere we reached a aoul, night had closed every object from view. In the middle of the day we had stopped to partake of a little refreshment.

We slept soundly, and shortly after sunrise were again in our saddles. Directing our course to the south-east, we ascended a low range of hills, having gained the summit of which a marvellously wonderful scene lay before us. Turning to the east, rocky mountains rose up very abruptly, and to the south the eye wandered across the steppe, which was like a boundless ocean, with no object on which to rest the weary gaze — all was lost in misty distance: no such sight as this was seen either on the Barabinsky or Yabagan steppes.

Whilst I stood lost in amazement at this, to me, novel sight, Mr. Atkinson was engaged finding specimens of copper ore; he then mounted his horse and we commenced looking for water. We had been many hours on horseback under a burning sun; our eyes were turned in every direction in search of it, but, alas! none was to be seen. I was completely parched with thirst. Seve-

ral hours passed and still no sign of water; at last, I observed a beautiful lake shining in the distance; to describe to you the joy I felt is impossible, no words of mine can give an adequate idea of my feelings.

I urged my horse on. One of the Cossacks rode up to me to say the beast would give in, if I went at such speed. I pointed to the water and told him I only wished to reach that, and then I should be satisfied. He shook his head and smiled, saying it was no water, merely a deception. I spoke to Mr. Atkinson; he likewise had been deceived; he, too, thought it was water. At times it appeared quite near to us, then it seemed at a great distance, and so this mirage kept tantalizing us poor thirsty mortals; our lips were black and salt. At last one of the Kirghis and my husband descried in the distance a string of camels: in about an hour and a half we came upon them; they were going for salt, and had come from Kopal.

I enquired if they had any water, but, alas! they had not a drop; they, too, were longing for the crystal fluid. After taking leave of these men we changed our course. Afterwards we met some Kirghis, who directed us to a aoul; we rode on briskly and at last really saw a lake shining in the distance. Oh! the joy I felt at that sight. I became so excited that when near the yourts I appeared to lose all command over myself and horse; at this instant he probably saw something to frighten him, or he might have trodden on a wasp in the grass, or it might have been the shock that was in store for him; be that as it may, he swerved on one side and threw me. I not being at all on the alert or prepared, fell; however,

I caught his mane and held fast to the reins. The men were off their horses in a trice; all laughed when they found I had sustained no injury at the way I clung to my horse; being assisted to remount, we hastened on, I foremost, and taking my drinking-cup from my pocket, passed it to one of the men who had come to meet us, exclaiming sou, sou (water, water), when, oh! horrible, I was given to understand that this beautiful shining lake was *salt*!

I was assisted from my horse, when the women came forward and brought me some milk, which I drank; it was but a poor means of quenching my fearful thirst. I could scarcely credit that the water was too salt to drink, and sent one of the men to bring me some to try. Alas! it was too true, it was perfect brine.

The somesvar was prepared with this briny liquid; it made no tea whatever: we compared it to London milk; it was a bluish white, Mr. Atkinson drank a little, but it was useless to try and take it in any shape.

We had some broiled mutton for dinner, and with it came a large bowl of fat, which, to my disgust, I was invited to drink. We both declined the proffered beverage. The man stood eyeing us for some time, so I asked why he did not take the fat away; he then bid the Cossack enquire whether he might be permitted to drink it if I would not. You may fancy I readily gave my consent, when he swallowed the whole with much gusto; in fact, they prefer this to the meat. I observed that whenever a Cossack put down a plate which we had used a Kirghis seized it, and, by a method peculiar to him, made it as bright and clean as if it had been

polished with a leather. After this I never failed to see my plate washed ere I used it.

We rested at this station but one hour, and at four o'clock started forward. The people said good water would be found twenty versts farther on. Our course was now directly east, in the direction of the Ala-kool.

The steppe was so smooth and level, that we galloped along at a great speed, but it was far farther than we were told, for we did not arrive till near nine; there was no water fit for drinking here—it was nothing more than a stagnant pool, horribly dirty; still tea was to be made with it.

I have not told you who were our companions on this journey. Of Kirghis there was no limit; they followed us for their own pleasure, or for the sake of the feast they were sure of having at the next aoul they reached, as the Kirghis ever slay a fatted sheep—not calf—on the arrival of strangers; indeed, these people pass the greater part of their time in visiting. Then we had three Cossacks, our constant attendants to Kopal; one of them served as Talmash, and was the devoted follower of Mr. Atkinson; his name was Peter, I surnamed him the Great, for he was one of the most consummate liars I ever met with; my husband said not so! he was only a poet; his imagination was certainly of a lively nature, he had an answer for everybody and a reason for everything. The next was a tall man and my devoted follower; singularly enough, his name was Alexae; then there was a young man, whose duty it was to attend to the Kirghis and ride by the camels;

they were all three wishful of serving us to the utmost of their power.

After leaving this aoul our way lay over marshy ground with tall reeds and bulrushes, and then rough grass growing high above our heads, with a swampy soil; we travelled versts before we could find a place to cross; at last it was thought we should succeed. Mr. Atkinson and a Kirghis went first, they then bid us follow: we spread ourselves over as wide a space as possible, no one following in the track of the other; we sank up to the saddle-flaps in the mire, though this was almost better than we expected; then a man was despatched for the camels, receiving instructions as to the best path to take. We all waited to see them safely over, being anxious about them; they got on very well till about the centre, when one of them coolly lay himself down, nor could he be induced to move till the whole of his pack was deposited in the mud. Mr. Atkinson was in a great state of excitement, believing it to contain his paper, sketches, &c., which would result in entire ruin to his projects. I enquired of Petroosha if it was so; he replied with his usual ingenuity, 'No! lady, they are *our* things; had they been *yours* do you think we should have *allowed* the camel to sit down?' However, they were our things, but not the papers. As an example of this man's mendacity, I must tell you we were proceeding along, when I missed Petroosha; in some little time he came up, I observed he was very loquacious, more so than usual; shortly one of the Kirghis came up; they invariably came to me when they had a complaint to make; this man made me under-

stand by signs that Petroosha had been thrashing him; his nose was slightly grazed, and by his dress it was evident that he had been on the ground. I turned to Petroosha and asked him to translate what the man said; for a moment he hesitated, and then said, 'You see, lady, he says, we do not proceed so fast to-day as we ought to, owing to these atrocious Kirghis horses! and that if we had Russian ones, we should be scampering over the plains like wild people!' Alexae was as surprised as I was at this declaration, he could no longer control himself, but started off at full gallop, his peals of laughter were heard ringing far over the steppe. 'I said, 'Petrooska, it is not true.' Looking at me with a stoical face he replied, 'Ye Bogha Baronae'—(by God, madame) 'it is true.' I had no remedy; but in the evening his misdeeds came to light, for Mr. Atkinson found that the stock of a gun of his that Peter was carrying had been broken in the scuffle.

On rising on the morning of the 13th we saw for the first time the snowy peaks of the Alatau shining like silver against a deep blue sky. It is a day I shall *never* forget; we set off at seven o'clock that morning. I enquired as usual the distance. Peter said forty versts, Alexae eighty versts; forty or eighty, it did not signify much—I was quite capable of doing either, but he said we must go the whole distance, as there would not be a drop of water to be had anywhere. Well, we started and travelled on and on—no change, no sign of our journey drawing to a close. About four o'clock, I being very thirsty, we stopped for a few moments, having been persuaded by Mr. Atkinson to try the water melon

given to us by the sessedatal at Aiagooz. This was the first time I had ever tasted one; my thirst was so parching that it appeared to me the most delicious thing I had ever tasted in my life. I enquired of the Cossacks how much farther it was to our resting-place, and was told ten versts; hour after hour I got the same answer, till, being tired of this, I said, 'I now insist on knowing the truth. How far are we from the aoul?' his answer was, 'We do not know.' I then bid him ask a Kirghis. After some talk, he turned to me and said, 'You see yonder blue mountain?' 'Yes!' Well, it is a *little* farther than that.' Mr. Atkinson being an excellent judge of distance, to my extreme horror, said that it was between forty and fifty versts. It would have been useless to have complained, so we cheered up and on we went.

We had sent forward a Cossack and Kirghis with instructions to stop at the first aoul and to make a large fire, that we might find them in the dark.

The sun was now descending fast, tingeing everything with a golden hue, while the mountains were almost lost in misty blue. There is little twilight here; as soon as the sun is down it is dark. We now commenced looking out for our beacon light, but hour after hour rolled on, and still none appeared; we now got among sand hills, made by the wind blowing it up in all directions; the men kept continually riding to the summit of these hillocks to look out for the light, but in vain.

About two o'clock in the morning I said I could not go farther without rest; I was likewise so cold that I

could scarcely hold the reins of my horse, as there was a cutting wind blowing from the snow mountains. I now dismounted, trembling with cold, having nothing on me but my dress, my warm jacket having been lost that day by coming unstrapped from my saddle; they gave me a bear's skin to lie down upon, and my husband's shube to cover over me. We had about a pint of rum, which we took with us as a medicine; my husband would insist upon my taking a little, when I drank about half a wine-glass full pure, without its taking the slightest effect upon me, further than I felt revived. He now sat down beside me; after sitting about half an hour I began to get warm, I then dozed off for a few moments, when our guide came to say we must go on or we should be all lost; without water the horses could not proceed after the sun rose. I got up, and felt so much refreshed, that I could go on again. My husband then fastened his shube around me with his belt, and got me with some difficulty stuck on to my horse, for the shube was such an unwieldy thing; then he tied a bear's skin round himself and away we went quite gaily, laughing at our singular costumes. Two hours more passed away, and *then* I found my strength begin to fail me. I dismounted and walked about a hundred paces; I again got on to my horse and another hour passed over, when I said, 'I cannot sit my horse longer,' and begged they would go on and leave me, and if they found water to return and bring me some. I once more descended and walked a little distance and again mounted. My husband now held me by the hand, in the other I kept the reins, but that was

all, I had no power to guide my poor horse. We now saw a thin streak of light appear on the steppe, and knew that day was breaking. I heard the barking of several dogs; no music ever sounded so sweetly in my ears. I cheered up, grasped the reins of my horse and rode on quite briskly; and at five, or a little after, we got to a aoul belonging to a poor Moollah. I was lifted off my horse by the women and actually carried into the yourt; they commenced rubbing my hands and feet, placed cushions and carpet for me to repose on. I asked for water, but Peter told me it was unfit to drink.

A fire was soon kindled for us. In this part of the steppe there is no wood, so the fires are made of camel or horses' dung, and an excellent one it makes. They soon prepared us tea, which I tried to drink, but could not. Having sat with the Moollah till seven, we mounted our horses and started for the yourt our Cossack had prepared for us; he had come to meet and guide us to it; it was about twelve versts farther, and glad enough I was to get there. I instantly made tea, and ate a little broiled mutton with it, I then lay down and slept; when I awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, and it was too late to think of starting that day, for we had ridden a distance of a hundred and fifty versts, without having tasted anything either solid or liquid, with the exception of the rum and water-melon, neither had the poor horses received any nourishment the whole of that time.

In August, a party of Cossacks, on their way to Kopal, had lost five of their comrades in crossing this part of

the steppe, the heat being so intense, and the want of water so severely felt; the graves of these poor fellows had been pointed out to us. It might have been our case, and most probably you would never have known our fate; but an all-wise and merciful Creator has ordained it otherwise, and we were preserved.

If we should be obliged to return by the same way, I shall dread the journey. The road differs according to the places where the Kirghis take up their abode, and they change these with the seasons of the year. Still I should like to see by daylight the road we passed over during the night.

From our resting-place we had to travel over one continued ascent and descent in deep sand, in which the horses sank up to their knees; we rode on, leaving the camels far behind, toiling and moaning most piteously. At length, after six hours' travelling, we arrived at a steep descent on to the steppe, which lay before us like a map, with nothing to bound the horizon. There is something grand, even in contemplating a steppe, stretching as this does over 3,000 versts; our little party looked like mere specks on this interminable waste.

At one time, this place must have been thickly inhabited, as, not far from a number of barrows, we crossed over a wide space that had once been irrigated. The canals still exist; in one channel we found a stream of beautiful running water; my husband immediately dismounted to procure me a glass, when he said there were a number of horse-hairs floating about in it; still I thought I could take them out, but instead of horse-

hairs they were living things, curling and twisting about like eels; one he succeeded in getting out was two feet long. I was not greatly disappointed; I had now learned to know that patience and resignation are necessary on a journey like ours.

At last the Cossack pointed out to us in the distance the river Lepsou; I no sooner heard this than I gave my horse the rein and galloped off as hard as I could go. I drank freely of it, and I thought it the sweetest water I had ever tasted in my life.

Mr. Atkinson started off immediately to some pools of water among the reeds, where he shot some ducks; on his return, he enquired for the large supply of shot we had, but it was nowhere to be found; the following morning the search was again renewed, with no better result. Mr. Atkinson was greatly annoyed, fearing he should not be able to procure more.

Peter's poetic talent was again exercised. I was sitting mending some of our garments, whilst Mr. Atkinson had again started forth in search of game, when Peter came and squatted himself down in front of me, as he usually did when he wished to commence a conversation. 'Ah!' he began, 'it is a great pity that shot is lost.' 'It is,' I replied, 'Peter, and very careless of you, as you ought to have known its value.' 'Well,' he continued, 'I own I am in fault, and more especially as it had been confided to my special care. When the master gave it me he said, "There, Petroosha, there, there is shot for thee, take it, and treasure it up as gold, or as thou wouldest thy own life, for it is far more precious than either," and to think, after all, that

I have lost it!' I said, 'Indeed, Peter, did your master say all that, could he speak so much Russian?' Not the least abashed, he answered, 'Ah! madame, it is only when *you* are present that he does not speak; but when you are not there he speaks beautifully; far better than you do.' With feigned surprise I said, 'Is it possible?' 'By God it is true!' was his exclamation.

When Mr. Atkinson returned, we had a hearty laugh at Peter's poetical genius; and I believe it went a long way to console him for the loss he had sustained.

We reached this place, Kopal, September 20th, after a journey of thirteen days, two of which were lost by our staying on the way. How long we shall stop here Heaven only knows, perhaps the whole winter; if so, we shall write to Barnaoul, to have all our letters forwarded to us.

I began this in October, and it is now the 14th November: you will naturally wonder what has prevented my finishing it; I am going to tell you. The first two weeks, what with one thing and what with another, I never could get time to write; each time I took my pen in hand I was interrupted, and as for sitting up at nights, *that* is out of the question, as nothing in the world can be got here excepting tea, and we are therefore obliged to be careful of our *candles*; and not we alone, but the Governor, Baron Wrangle, is no better supplied. But you are already asking what excuse I can make for the two last weeks. Here I have a little family history to relate. You must understand that I was in expectation of a little stranger, whom I thought might arrive about the end of December or the beginning of January;

expecting to return to civilisation, I had not thought of preparing anything for him, when, lo! and behold, on the 4th November, at twenty minutes past four P. M., he made his appearance. The young doctor here said he would not live more than seven days, but, thank Heaven, he is still alive and well. He is small, but very much improved since his birth. I shall let him get a little bigger before I describe him. He is to be called Alatau, as he was born at the foot of this mountain range; and his second name Tamchiboulac, this being a dropping-spring, close to which he was called into existence. The doctor says the premature birth was caused by excessive exercise on horseback.

Doubtless, seeing I speak of the doctor, you imagine we have a competent one here. Far from it, he is but twenty-three years of age; theoretically he may be clever, practically certainly not. When my husband applied to him in my case, he declared he had not the slightest knowledge of anything of the kind.

The day after my little man was born I got up, and, after walking about the room and doing a few odd things, I went to bed again, but the day after I got up after breakfast, and have been up during the whole day ever since. I should have written to tell you last Sunday, but I was too weak, and the post leaves here only once in the week, and that is on Mondays. I intend writing by next week's post, I shall then have more time to give you a description of this place, and an idea of how we live.

Although it is so long since you wrote to me, I shall still answer your letter. I wrote to you from Tomsk,

and the letter was taken to the post by a soldier then in our service; the idea has since occurred to me, that perhaps he destroyed the letter and pocketed the money; it has sadly annoyed me. From Tomsk I wrote also to Mrs. Tate, but as yet I have received no answer. I despatched the letter in April, and we did not leave Barnaoul till July, so there was ample time to have a reply. I fear we relied too much on the honesty of our soldier, and her letter has met with the same fate as yours.

CHAPTER V.

Kopal—A Yourt—Overtaken by a Bouran—Our House Furniture—A cordial Reception—Culinary Resources—A merry Party—Musical Soirées—A Ball—A hasty Toilet—Odd Guests—Tongues Loosened—Effect of Chinese Spirit—A grand Event—Kind Attentions—Thankfulness to God—A sleepy Nurse—Sagacious Dogs—Distance Travelled.

Kopal, November 21st, 1848.

I TOLD you in my last letter of our arrival here, but I had not time to give you a full description of everything. I said, at night we used to take up our quarters in what the Kirghis call a yourt. It is like a round tent formed of a framework of willow, and covered over with a kind of felt cloth, called voilock; it is made of wool and camel's hair. The door, or rather what serves as a door, is so contrived as to roll up or down at will. The top of the yourt rises in the centre, which may also be opened, when necessary, either to admit the air, or give an issue to the smoke. The fire is always made in the centre, and of course on the ground, and all around it is covered with voilock, and over this carpets are spread. Thus in fine weather a yourt is no despicable accommodation, but Heaven protect you when a bouran, or even a moderately fresh breeze, arises. Here in Kopal I have been awoke out of my sleep by the wind, and have expected every

instant the tent would be dashed to pieces. The hospital, which stands directly opposite our present abode, when a bouran has arisen, has been completely hidden from view. These winds carry everything before them, bricks or anything that comes in their way: the safest plan, when one arises, is to throw yourself flat on the ground.

One morning, the wind was blowing frightfully. I hastened to dress and get breakfast over as quickly as possible; I was, moreover, *so* cold that I did not know what to do. A fire was not to be thought of, as the smoke was enough to blind one (by the way, the Kirghis suffer fearfully from ophthalmia). I had only got the first cup of tea poured out, when I was obliged to rush out of the tent, and precipitate myself into the governor's, his being larger and stronger than ours. The gust over, we returned home, swallowed our breakfast, and placing all our goods and chattels in the middle of the yourt, we covered them over, and left it to its fate. It certainly weathered the storm, but it was no longer in the same place on our return.

Now, I am happy to say, we have a *house* over our heads. We have been in it about a month, having entered it before it was finished, and just one week before the little fellow was born. I now often think what would have become of me had we been in a yourt when I was confined. I believe both I and the child must have died. I have been sometimes so indisposed, and with such shocking accommodation, that I really wonder it has not killed me.

Perhaps it will interest you to know how our house is

furnished. We have one *chair*, the only one in Kopal, *one* stool; but we are rich in tables, as we have *two*; our bedstead is composed of a few planks placed on two blocks of wood, with voilock, and then furs instead of a mattress. Think not we are worse off than others. No! our house is as well, if not better, furnished than the governor's, as he has nothing but the voilock to sleep on.

Every time I now hear the wind blow I thank God with all my heart I am not in a yourt. My two small rooms appear to me equal to any palace; I feel so happy in them.

I must now tell you of our reception here. Baron Wrangle, the governor, was much surprised at seeing a lady enter, and perhaps also at my appearance, for, to say truth, I was not very presentable. On our journey I had mounted camels and bulls as well as horses, but the last day, having a stream to cross to enable me to reach a Tartar encampment, I found it too deep to ford pleasantly, as the water would reach to my waist. Whilst hesitating what was best to be done, a Kirghis, who had followed us down the bank, without ceremony walked into the water, and, placing himself before me in a stooping posture, patted his back, and signed for me to mount, which I at last did, and crossed on the man's back.

We found the Baron sitting cross-legged on a stool, with a long Turkish pipe in his mouth, a small Tartar cap on his head, and a dressing-gown, *à la Kirghis* Mr. Loigonoff, the engineering officer, and the topographer, were dressed in exactly the same way. They all gave us a most cordial welcome: we sat chatting till

a late hour. The tent in which we found the party assembled was very large, and used as the common sitting-room; each had a small one for a sleeping apartment, one was allotted to us, and another was used as a kitchen: thus we formed quite a little colony.

Now I will give you an idea of our culinary resources. First, such a thing as a vegetable is not to be seen, either fresh or preserved, of any kind whatever; no butter, no eggs, nothing but meat and rice, not even milk, and as for bread, it is the coarsest and blackest I ever saw. Black bread I manage to eat, and have eaten a great deal; this, however, is the worst I have ever met with. Even Mr. Atkinson has some difficulty in swallowing it, and he can do more than I can in this way, especially when it is an act of courtesy: for instance, we once entered a Tartar dwelling; tea was given, but it was brick tea. I sipped, and sipped, and sipped, at the atrocious compound, till a fortunate moment arrived when the Tartar's back was turned, and then I poured the tea on to the ground, but Mr. Atkinson kept drinking glass after glass, just as if he enjoyed it. On asking him why he did not decline taking the horrid beverage, he replied, 'Surely you would not have me hurt the feelings of the poor man!' I own my disposition is not so amiable.

If we spend the winter here, and I suppose we shall, you will have some idea of the *comforts* we enjoy. It is very different from Ekaterinburg or Barnaoul; there not only had we the necessaries of life, we had some luxuries also.

Still I am sure you would have some difficulty in

finding a happier or a merrier party than we form. At the end of September and the beginning of October, we used to take long rides round Kopal, and in the evenings we all assembled in the *drawing*-room, where our amusements varied. At times we had a serious conversation, at others a merry one, for the Baron has a fund of entertaining anecdotes; he has sometimes made us laugh immoderately. Perhaps I ought to say that the Baron, like Petroosha, has a poetical genius.

Then we have musical soirées, vocal and instrumental. Mr. Loigonoff, Captain Abakamoff, and myself, are the audience, and the performers the Baron and my husband; the latter plays the flute, and the former the guitar. The evening usually concludes with the English and the Russian anthem.

And now I must tell you of a ball we have had, decidedly the first that ever took place in this part of the world. Having heard that some of the officers' wives had arrived, I thought it my duty to visit them, as is customary in Siberia, but was told by our host that it was needless; and, indeed, he would rather I should not; that a building was being temporarily erected, in which he intended giving a ball to commemorate his arrival as governor or priestoff, and in honour of us, and then I could make the acquaintance of the ladies. To this arrangement I readily consented.

The house was at length completed, and the invitations sent out for the same day. Having but one dress besides my travelling one, I drew it forth and looked with dismay at its tumbled appearance. I had a small

iron with me fortunately, the only one in Kopal, so I despatched our Cossack to and fro to the kitchen to have it heated. Thus, with a flannel petticoat for an ironing blanket, and a box for a table, I managed to make it decent, and forthwith I commenced my toilet. The guests were bidden for five o'clock, but our host begged of me to be ready earlier to receive his lady visitors. In the midst of my dressing a bouran arose; I was obliged to rush to one side of the tent to hold it down, my candle was blown out, leaving me in total darkness. Mr. Atkinson ran outside to call the men, who were heard screaming and running in all directions, as the kitchen, with all the *delicacies* for the coming feast, was being nearly swept away; at last, with ropes and beams of wood, it, as well as our tent, was secured. With some difficulty I got a light, and resumed my dressing; in the meantime, I received three notes to hasten operations.

Having smartened myself to the best of my ability, we started; it was only three paces, for all our tents had been bodily moved to the vicinity of the house. We found our host in full uniform; he was scarcely recognisable; indeed, he laughed to see himself. Then there was his body-guard, a Kirghis, by name Yarolae, the grandest man in the place; he wore a magnificent new dressing-gown, a splendid shawl round his waist, and a tall-pointed silk cap, and red boots; altogether he looked and felt superb.

The room had wooden stools placed round; the carpenter had been several days busy preparing them, and at one end of it a few planks were raised from the

ground; these were covered over with a carpet, and served for a sofa. This being the place of honour, I was seated here to await the coming guests, who shortly made their appearance.

Yarolae's bearing was usually calm and dignified, but hearing the wail of the camel he became quite excited, and giving a caper he said, 'Here they are!' and made a rush down stairs. He shortly returned, followed by two ladies; and walking like a prince into the centre of the apartment, he announced, in a voice like thunder, 'Madame Ismaeloff and Madame Tetchinskoy.' The contrast between them and the gaily-attired Kirghis was too striking. The former lady was a soncy-faced old body, with a bright shining skin, a clean dark-coloured cotton dress, a white collar which reached to her shoulders, a white cap with a very full border, a lilac silk shawl, and brown worsted gloves, completed her attire; her companion, a small person, had a similar dress, but instead of the shawl she wore a pink satin mantle, trimmed with white lace. They came up to me, each giving me three kisses, and took a seat on either side of me, without uttering a word. Yarolae was again off; the next visitor was proclaimed by the roaring of a bull. The door was thrown open very wide, and 'Anna Pavlovna' was announced. My gravity was this time sorely tried, and more so as I glanced at the Baron; his face was irresistible, he went forward to shake Anna by the hand; her deep-toned sonorous voice resounded through the room.

She was a tall stout woman, dressed in the Russian sarafan (peasant's dress) a cotton, of the brightest and

most variegated colours, very short, and round the bottom it was edged with pink, about two inches deep; a pair of good strong shoes, with nails, and *no* stockings, and bound round her head was a red cotton handkerchief; as you may imagine, she was gloveless; but what an arm and hand she had! big enough to knock down anyone who approached her ungraciously. But her face was beaming with smiles and good nature; she, too, came forward like the others, and bowing down low, saluted my cheeks three times, and then took her seat.

I certainly did not expect to see ladies of the first fashion; but I was not at all prepared for what I did see, as the husbands were gentlemen. Again the moaning of the camel was heard, and another announcement, which was the last, of the ladies. These two were from Bisk, and had more pretensions than the others. Madame Serabrikoff had on a woollen dress, and the other a faded green silk, with a patch in the skirt, of another colour; this latter visitor found means during the evening of telling me that she had not expected the *ball* to take place so soon, otherwise she would have had her *polka* ready to wear; it was a beautiful blue satin, which had been presented to her on leaving Bisk.

Tea, coffee, and chocolate were handed round by Yarolae. The gentlemen assembled, and then came the musicians. We had a drum, two violins, and a fife; for the past fortnight they had been daily drilled by the Baron, in an attempt to teach them a polka. The ball opened by a polka danced by our host and myself. Afterwards we had quadrilles, in which my friend Anna

Pavlovna was delicious, but in the Russian national dance she shone. Her great joy was to induce my husband to dance with her; his doing so certainly added to the merriment of the evening, and, in spite of her strange costume, she was, with the exception of Yarolae, decidedly the most graceful person in the room.

At the commencement of the entertainment the ladies sat bolt upright, each trying to look more stately than her neighbour; their voices were scarcely heard above a whisper, until the spirit, which at first they were rather coy of touching, had enlivened them; then their tongues were loosened, and oh! how they did run on. I reproved the Baron for offering it to the ladies; his reply was, 'I know my company.' The gentlemen were not backward in imbibing their potations; those who did not dance played cards, and at each shuffle all but the dealer rose to do honour to the abominable spirit. Supper was placed on the *tables* at eight, and a little after ten all had taken their departure, unable to stay longer. We remarked that it was our host's own fault for pressing them to drink; he answered, 'You do not understand society in this part of the world, but I will enlighten you. To-morrow, if you could enter the abodes of these people, and listen to their private conversation, you would hear them say what a delightful evening they had passed; whereas, if I treated them as in more polished society, they would be dissatisfied. And the sooner I render them in the state they like to be, the quicker I am rid of them; and now,' said he, 'let us have our supper.' He then resumed his Kirghis costume, and perching himself on his stool commenced

a merry air on his guitar, delighted at having rid himself of his guests so quickly.

The effect of Chinese spirit is of a peculiar nature. One of the ladies told me, at day-break it was customary for her husband to rise and open the window to see the kind of morning, when the air, after drinking Chinese brandy, produced the same effect as if he had only just taken it, for he commenced dancing and cutting all kinds of capers at the open window.

It was in the latter days of October that we entered our present abode, and I was occupied sewing lambs' skins together for a warm jacket for me to cross the steppe. It had been our intention to return to civilisation, when our plans were put an end to by the unexpected arrival of the little stranger, on the 4th November. It was fortunate my husband was at home: he had returned only the evening before, having been absent two days on a shooting expedition. The birth of my little fellow was a grand event in Kopal; several children had been born within the last month, but not one survived; several had been born on the journey across the steppe, but all died; mine was the only one which lived.

I do not know what I should have done had it not been for the attentions of Madame Tetchinskoy. During the night the bouran was so terrific that not a sound scarcely could be heard within doors. I never closed my eyes during that night; my heart was lifted up in thankfulness to the Creator for all His mercies to me. Had this event occurred one short week earlier, and on such a night, what should I have done? The child

was enveloped in furs and placed on a leathern trunk against the stove to keep him warm; the woman was stretched on the floor wrapped in a sheep-skin. I lay on my bed, hearing the poor infant, when there was a moment's lull in the storm, moaning. I screamed to the woman to give the poor little thing to me, but not a sound did she hear; at last, after about two hours I managed to awaken her, and make her understand; she took up the poor babe, and poking it at me like a bundle of straw, down she was again immediately; the instant the child touched me, it ceased its moaning. They had placed in its mouth a piece of muslin, containing black bread and sugar dipped in water, and, indeed, this was all he had till the third day, when he received his natural food.

You will ask who and what was this woman who lay in my room. She had been condemned to receive a hundred lashes for destroying her infant ere it saw the light, and probably at this moment she would not have been alive had not a Cossack come forward and offered to marry her before she had undergone the sentence, and he received fifteen lashes instead of her—such is the law. They are living very happily together: to judge from all I have seen, she is a very kind woman, willing to oblige when she can.

On our road hither we were followed by a large dog, a very fine creature, with a brown skin marked like a tiger; his ears are beautiful, long, and quite black. Evidently he had been ill used; his mouth was in a sad state; apparently, it had been bound with a rope, there was a wound all round the muzzle. After many trials,

he at last allowed Mr. Atkinson to anoint it with ointment, which he did daily for some time; it was shortly cured, and the poor beast's gratitude was unbounded; I never saw any animal love its master as this one does. Some one stole him from us, and tied him up with a thick rope, but he broke loose and came home with the rope round his neck. Last week, however, he started off in the morning for the mountains, but did not return at night, as usual. Three days we watched for his coming, and became alarmed; the third night I was aroused from my sleep by a noise at the door. I awoke my husband, saying I thought it was the dog; he got up, and opening it, in he walked, making a most tremendous rattle and clatter. He had been stolen again; but the poor fellow had again broken away, and came home with an immensely thick long chain dragging after him—even *iron* is not strong enough to keep him away from his master; but I fear they have got our other dog Jatier quite away from us. She has been absent about a fortnight.

What think you of our dog's name? he is called Alatau! and our Cossack distinguishes him from the baby by calling the latter Gospodeen (Mr.) Alatau.

Whilst on the subject of dogs, I may tell you an anecdote of one of ours. We have, or rather had, five. Mme. Jatier is (or was) the favourite, and allowed to sleep in a corner of the yourt, or enter it at pleasure; she was fed first; in one word, held a distinguished position. One day Mr. Atkinson was away on a hunting excursion, Alatau accompanying him; it was a few days after our arrival in Kopal. The task of feeding

them in his absence fell to me. I had soup made; when it was brought, I fed one at a time, Jatier naturally first. One day, as she did not answer to my call, I fed Appoleck; before he had dined, Mme. Jatier returned, and wished to drive him off, but this I would not permit, so we had a grand scuffle. After dining, he walked away in a very orderly manner. I then offered her her dinner, but she sulked and would not have it. When I called Ashara, another *lady*, there was another battle between us; but I was firm. Ashara finished, I once more offered her her dinner, but no, she would not approach, so I called Actigoon — she was more furious than ever, but I kept guard. When all were finished, I once more offered it, but she would not come near; I indulged her in a clean plate, and not till then did she consent to eat. I afterwards seated myself on the carpet in the yourt, with my sewing; a little later Jatier entered, and, as she did not come and lie at my feet, as usual, I fancied it was one of the other dogs had dared to enter, and looked round, when there stood Jatier certainly, but scarcely recognisable — she was literally one mass of mud; of her glossy black coat not a speck was visible; there she was, wagging her tail, and looking as impertinently as possible. I was angry, and getting up from the ground and taking my whip, said, 'You dirty creature, how dare you come here!' but, before I reached her, she was off like a shot, and, by the time I was outside the tent, she was racing far over the steppe. Not many minutes afterwards she returned, looking as clean and glossy as ever; this time, she came without a word, and took her accustomed place.

I maintain that she was fully aware of my horror of dirt, and had rolled herself in the mud purposely to annoy me, because I had not waited for her to dine first. The creature stood staring at me instead of lying down, and, when I took the whip, she knew, because she had seen me whip the other dogs, but never fled when I did so, but stood calmly beside me; it was, moreover, the first time I had ever seen a speck of dirt on her coat, and she must have gone some little distance, as there was no mud anywhere near.

I will give you another instance of their sagacity. When in Bisk, Colonel Keil lent Mr. Atkinson a dog, which he said was excellent for birds — her name was Calypso — she was a great coward, having a thorough dread of the water, which she had to encounter many times on our way to Altin-kool.

As I before stated, Jatier was indulged and used to sit in the balagan by the side of her master, and Calypso at a respectful distance without. It happened, however, one day that Jatier gravely offended her master, so he gave her a thrashing, whereupon she deemed it prudent not to come too near. Calypso, who had observed all, but sat perfectly still, now stealthily approached her master, and, finding she received a caress, took courage, and walking round him, seated herself in Jatier's place. The tables were turned, and Jatier was dishonoured. Happening to look up from my tea, I saw Calypso screwing up her nose, and making grimaces at Jatier: I make no doubt but they thoroughly understand each other. Poor Calypso's reign was of short duration, for Mr. Atkinson, never long angry with any animal, once

more caressed his favourite. No sooner had he done so, than she entered the balagan, and gave Calypso a thorough thrashing, as if she had been the cause of her disgrace, and then drove her out, and reinstated herself in her former position.

My letter will appear to you a very strange one, all in detached pieces, but you must excuse it, for my occupations are of so varied a nature, that I find it difficult to collect my thoughts for letter-writing.

Since I left you in February last, I have travelled in a carriage 6,267 versts, on horseback 2,040, in boats and on a raft 760. This is the distance we have gone in the direct road; but I have done much more, having been on several excursions on horseback; for instance, the very evening after our arrival here, we went on a trip of 17 versts.

This year my husband has travelled 10,705 versts in a carriage, 2,290 on horseback, and 1,490 in boats, exclusive of divers excursions for sketching of 40 or 50 versts distance; so, you see, the ground we have gone over is immense :—

	Versts.	English miles.
My husband in all direct travelling . . .	14,485	About 10,864
I the same . . .	9,067	„ 6,800

CHAPTER VI.

A contented Spirit—Slovenly Cook—Supplicating for a Whipping—Arrival of Spring—Sultan Souk—Novel Introduction—Shock of an Earthquake—Mountain Excursions—Easter Festivities—Loan of my Watch—Demand for Medicine-chest—Amusing Circumstance—Scenery of Kopal—A dropping Well—Enormous Mass of Snow—Large Tomb—Valley of the Karatal—Venerated Ruins—Religious Conversation—Visits from Kirghis Friends—Domestic Servants—A Love-Potion—'The course of true Love,' &c.—The Baron's Laundress—Castigation of a Wife—Enormous Snakes.

Kopal, May 3rd, 1849.

We have been much amused, on reading your letter, at the proposition you make, of our sending to an adjoining town for a *bed*. Koolja, the nearest, is a Chinese town; what they possess there in the shape of beds I do not know. Spirit I know they have, for Yarolae has been often for it; but to a Russian town, we should have to send 1,000 versts there, and the same distance back; therefore, we had a hearty laugh over your letter. My hope is, that I shall never be worse off than I am at present. A hard couch and hard fare I am accustomed to. Many a good lesson have I learned on this journey, and one is, how little is required to nourish our bodies.

On our first arrival here I was dainty; but all this is passed. The only thing I cannot bring my mind to eat

is horseflesh, though we have eaten it many a time unknowingly. One of the things I enjoy more than anything else is rice, which I invariably refused on our arrival, on account of its dirty appearance; but now, after scraping off the outside, I really enjoy it, as you would also, were you deprived of every kind of vegetable.

One day the Baron, seeing me busy removing the dirt from the rice, asked if I had been in the kitchen; to my reply in the negative, he said he thought perhaps I had seen what he had that morning. On going to speak with the cook (a soldier), he observed the rice on the table, well washed, and looking beautifully white, and beside it a horrible-looking cloth. He demanded of George what that was; 'a clout,' he replied; 'but what clout?' said the Baron; 'to boil the rice in.' But he questioned further about the clout, and at last drew from him that it was a 'foot-binder,' literally, the rag which the peasantry as well as soldiers wrap round the feet instead of stockings!

After this éclaircissement we had cleaner rice, for George, under dread of the birch, had to bring each morning the pudding-cloth, to undergo a critical examination. Scarcely a day passes without the poor fellow receiving some two dozen strokes of the birch; dirty though he is, I always feel sorry for poor George.

A story is told in Kopal, that the poor fellow is accustomed to go to the guard-house, when dinner is over, to receive the birch (that being his most leisure time). He once presented himself; on being asked what he wanted, he said he had come to be whipped; he was told that no orders had been given about him,

and that he had better go home, but he would not, and begged earnestly of the guard to give him the rod. They steadfastly refused; he said, with tears in his eyes, that he was sure he deserved it. He did not wish to have the trouble of returning, as he had supper to prepare; he supplicated so earnestly for them to comply with his request, that, to be rid of his importunities, they yielded to his wish.

Right glad am I to tell you that winter is passed, and spring with all its charms is here. All Nature looks smiling and lovely. In February I was gathering wild flowers on the steppe, and in the sheltered nooks of the mountains. During winter we were complete prisoners; now, again, we walk or ride daily. It was mournful, in the miserable cold weather, to witness so many poor creatures being carried to their last home. The hospital is directly opposite our windows, so that we see all that is going on. The fine weather is a relief to everybody; it also brings visitors from the Kirghis. Amongst the most frequent is old Sultan Souk. Many an hour does he pass in our rooms, and one of the great attractions is a small travelling looking-glass. He goes into my bed-room, where it hangs against the wall, and stands for an hour or more, making all kinds of grimaces, and laughing loudly; it is probably the first time he ever saw his own face. He sadly wished to persuade me to present it to him; he coaxed me out of a pair of scissors, and took them to his armourer, who made others from them — the first that were ever manufactured in the steppe. They were given to the Baron, who promised them to me, but, learning that we thought

them a curiosity, he retracted, I presume, for I never received them. Another attraction for the old gentleman was the child; indeed, Kirghis came from far and near to see him; one Sultan sent a follower of his a distance of 200 versts for some smoked mutton for the child *to eat* when he was *six weeks'* old.

All the people are introduced into our rooms by Yarolae. When it is any fresh arrival, he marches with great state into the apartment, and, motioning for them to take a seat on the floor, he hands Mr. Atkinson his flute, saying, in a commanding tone (egraï), play. He imagines he is doing a great service to him in making his talent known.

Then there is an examination of all the little articles we have lying about. One Sultan was so much struck by a pair of gloves belonging to Mr. Atkinson, that he ran out of the room, with them on, to show to his followers. On his return, I, knowing my husband would not like to wear them after they had been such a lengthened period on his hands, signed to him that he might keep them; he retired, but shortly returned with Yarolae, who translated, that if I wished to present anything to him, a towel would be more acceptable. To satisfy him I gave him one, and took the gloves back, intending to present them to some one else; on my leaving the room for a moment, and coming back, I found the Sultan and gloves had both vanished.

On Sunday, February 6th, for the first time in my existence, I felt the shock of an earthquake, than which nothing is more singular. I was up and dressing at the time, when I heard a noise as if heavy artillery was

approaching; for a second, such was my idea, but it quickly vanished when I felt the rocking to and fro of the little building in which we were.

The Baron's poetical genius was once more aroused, for he came running into our room shortly afterwards to know if we had felt the shock, declaring he was fast asleep, but was awoke by being shook out of his bed.

As it was impossible to leave Kopal and travel in the upper regions before May, we varied the monotony of our lives by short excursions into the mountains, where a yourt was sent with all the provisions we should require for the day. One trip we made was to a mineral spring, on the banks of the Kopal, high up in the mountains; we found it up in a small ravine, three or four hundred feet above the river, among dark marble rocks. A bath had been constructed here, perhaps ages ago, as it was now nearly filled up with stones, the water was quite warm to the hands. We bathed the child in it, and, singularly enough, since then, a roughness he had on his skin from his birth is now quite vanished.

Another change—Easter with all its festivities arrived. For many days it was one round of pleasure; each of the officers gave a ball similar to the one I have described.

On Easter Sunday we had a visit at nine in the morning from all the officers, and the more youthful of the ladies. Each of the gentlemen carried his stool with him, knowing full well that we had but two seats in our place; they had also the *mover* of the fun with them (viz., the brandy), as that was another article

they were sure of not finding with us. The musicians followed, the room was cleared in an instant, and a dance struck up, when, although the hour was an early one, all joined right merrily; they then seated themselves, and the bottle passed round. Afterwards came another dance, and off they went to the Baron's, inviting us to follow. I was amused at a new-comer asking me if I knew how to dance the 'rococo.'

On Easter eve a Cossack came to me, begging I would lend him my watch, that they might know to a moment when twelve o'clock struck. I did so willingly, but regretted when I learned the following day that they had, with Ismaeloff at their head, erected a little shed, no church yet being constructed, in which divine service had been performed, as I should have liked to have been present. The man returned me my watch quite safely, expressing great gratitude that I had allowed him to have it. It afforded us pleasure to be of the slightest service to these men, they were always so good-natured and willing. Scarcely a day passed without one or the other coming, as our medicine chest was in great demand; they had more faith in us than in their doctor.

There was one circumstance connected with the medicine which amused us when we discovered it. On leaving Zmeinogorsk, Colonel Gerngrose had supplied us with a gallon of spirit and cayenne, which had been prepared in large quantities in the Zavods, by order of the Emperor, in case of cholera breaking out, to rub the patient with. We carried it with us to Kopal; none of our party having been attacked, it remained sealed

up. One day the Baron's laundress came to say her husband's legs were bad; they thought he had taken cold, and he was suffering much pain. I consulted Mr. Atkinson, and then told the woman her patient had better go to the bath, and, when very warm, rub his legs with the spirit which I gave her. After this there was no end of such symptoms; indeed, this medicine was more in request than any other. I heard that Mr. Tetchinskoy was ill; so I started off to visit the sick man. I found him moaning and groaning fearfully from inward suffering. I proposed sending him a little peppermint; but he declined taking it, and asked if I had nothing else. I replied in the negative. After much talking, he said he had heard that I had spirit and cayenne, and he fancied that would cure him. 'What,' I said, 'drink it! why, it will kill you to swallow it.' He then informed me that he had taken it several times without injury. I now saw clearly the reason why so many applications had been made for it.

I accompanied my husband from Kopal on several of his excursions for the purpose of sketching the beautiful scenery, all of which I shall leave him to describe, except the spring whence our son takes his name. The Tamchiboulac, which in Kirghis means a dropping well, breaks out of a gravel bed about seven feet below the surface; the rocks form a semicircle, and over the whole surface the water is seen dropping like brilliants, to collect in a rocky basin at the bottom, from which it runs in a considerable stream over fallen rocks to the Kopal. At the top large plants are grow-

ing, some hanging over in very picturesque masses: it is an enchanting spot.

We went on a short journey into the mountains, which are on a grand scale, many of them covered with eternal snow. We saw in one part, on the edge of a great precipice, a perpendicular face of snow, not less than a thousand feet high. This appeared to have been broken off by some great convulsion, as huge masses of rock were heaped up in the utmost confusion at its base. Just fancy how many ages have elapsed since this mighty mass began to form.

As travellers are generally accused of exaggeration, perhaps it may be necessary to tell you that nothing of the kind shall enter into the account of our journey.

During our ride on Sunday, May 1st, we passed a large tomb, about twenty-five feet high, formed of rough stones, on which horse-tails, hair, rags, and other offerings were placed by Kirghis, who hold this tomb in great reverence. They have a tradition that it is the grave of a mighty Kalmuk chief, a king who ruled over his subjects with so much justice and wisdom, that he is still permitted to watch over those who inhabit the kingdom.

About fifty versts farther on we descended into the valley of the Karatal, which has been the theatre of great events, and the scene of numerous battles. In many parts of the plain we found tombs in which hundreds may have been buried. They are of great magnitude, and afford matter for much speculation.

To the west of this rises a moderately high hill, on which, ages ago, the great Lama resided. The founda-

tion of his dwelling and that of a temple are still to be seen, now only shapeless masses of stone. Not far from these ruins we met with an old Moollah, whose acquaintance we had made in Kopal, and who spoke tolerable Russian; he gave us tea and fruit, and treated us most hospitably. Mr. Atkinson says this man has more influence in the steppes than the Archbishop of Canterbury has in his diocese.

Our conversation turned upon religion, and his ideas of Christianity were rather curious. He says that our clergy are all impostors, and the doctrines they preach nothing but humbug; that everything they do is for gain, and not for the love of God, whom they reduce to the state of man, when they tell you He made this world in six days, and was then so tired that he was obliged to sleep on the seventh.

The Moollah says God can create in a moment. He has not to work like a cobbler for ten or twelve hours a day. What would our divines say to this?

When it was known we should leave Kopal at the end of the month, we had farewell visits from many of our Kirghis friends. Amongst the foremost was the old Sultan Sook, with whom I was a great favourite, who bade me tell my husband not to fatigue me so much by taking me with him the next time he visited the steppe, as he would give him any number of wives he liked; at the same time, he should always be pleased to see me.

The reason why I had gained favour with the old man was, that the Kirghis always think highly of a woman who can use her needle, and Yarolae had trum-

peted forth my fame. I had been busy manufacturing a little hat out of a small piece of red merino, for the child to wear on his journey. I had in my work-box a little silk, so I embroidered it and placed an eagle's feather in front; and when completed it did not look ugly. Yarolae was enchanted, particularly with the broad brim; I presumed because he was fond of the child, whom he often used to take for a promenade, or to show to any new-comer, holding him as gently as I would do myself: but what was my astonishment when this great big man begged of me to give the hat to him! I refused. He came several days in succession. At last, I asked my husband to cut me another piece of pasteboard and I would make him one, if I could find sufficient cloth. When Yarolae heard this his joy was unbounded, he scarcely left my side. I made it perfectly grand by decorating it with beads and earrings, and when it was finished he walked off to the Baron, begging for permission to wear it. His master told me I had done him an ill service, as Yarolae was now never at home; for he had procured a horse, and was riding through the town every day displaying the magnificent acquisition to his toilette.

Our preparations for departure will not take long; our great drawback is flour. We have been able to buy only two poods (72lb.). Another pood was sent to us by one of the officers, who could ill afford to part with it; moreover, he is not rich, and will not accept any remuneration, further than some candles which were sent to us, previously to the arrival of which we had been obliged to follow the example of the birds, that is, go to roost at

dusk. The flour before starting we shall have made into sucarees; it is but a small quantity for three months' journey.

I do not believe that I have given you any idea of our domestic servants. Women are not to be had; indeed, there is much difficulty in hiring one to wash the floors. Madame Tetchinskoy has a Kirghis, and the Baron is served by the daughter of a Cossack, the remainder of the work being performed by men. From my knowledge of the female sex in this part of the world, I am rather thankful than otherwise that they are not to be had; they are a strange as well as a dangerous set to have anything to do with. The Baron was nigh being poisoned by his Abigail, who had conceived a deep passion for him, and who, being a Cossack's daughter, considered herself noble, and worthy of aspiring to become his bride. He not responding to her love, she prepared a most noxious love-potion for him, after drinking which he would become so enamoured of her, that he would never be able to live without her. Fortunately, it was discovered in time; she received a severe reprimand and was banished the house. Yarolae went farther, for he gave her a good thrashing, and threatened, if ever she came again, she should have the whip.

The Kirghis young lady, Miss Soundook, Madame Tetchinskoy's maid, was beloved by a Kirghis youth in the Baron's service, by name Adiyol. The young lady responded to his love, and all went on well; but it is said 'the course of true love never did run smooth.' One day Adiyol's tchimbar (wide trowsers) could nowhere be found; as he was dressed at the Baron's cost, a strict

search was instituted. Yarolae became anxious, fearing the Baron might implicate him, and the more so, as he had been the first to discover that Adiyol was minus the tchimbar. The youth had been questioned, but nothing could be elicited from him as to their whereabouts; he declared he knew nothing of them.

One day, Yarolae being in the town, perceived Miss Soundook wearing the identical tchimbar. It was the work of a moment for him to alight from his horse and seize her; she struggled violently, but he being a powerful man, and with apparently few scruples, laid her on the ground, and, divesting her of them, carried them home in triumph. It appeared that Adiyol had left them with his mistress, intending to redeem them by some other love-token at a future period. It was the cause of a quarrel between the lovers, she believing her betrothed had been mean enough to take back the present he had made, and had bribed Yarolae to do so for him.

Another person I must not neglect to mention is the Baron's laundress. Her husband, a Cossack, and really a fine-looking young man, from being very healthy, suddenly became sickly; and his comrades, amongst whom he was a favourite, were all sorry for him, fearing he might die, as so many had done. One day a workman, happening to fall asleep in a building they were constructing within the fortress, was awoke by the sound of voices; he listened, and heard the laundress in connection with a Cossack, plotting a most diabolical scheme for ridding herself of her husband, the poison she was giving being too slow. After they left, the work-

man crept out stealthily to be quite sure he had made no mistake, and observed the two conspirators going off in different directions; he went immediately, and gave information to the Baron. Two Cossacks were despatched in quest of her; she was placed in prison, and a guard set over her.

The following day she was tried and convicted of the crime of attempting to poison, and condemned to receive the birch, fifty rods to be applied by the husband, who had been sent for and was present during the trial. The sentence was promptly put into execution inside the prison, two Cossacks holding her; afterwards she was placed on a bull and drummed out of the fortress, the husband taking charge of her.

You see this was no love-potion, but really a case of poisoning. What displeased me in the affair was, her accomplice was not tried, nor any punishment whatever awarded him: it was not even-handed justice.

Thus I am fortunate in being surrounded by the male sex alone; indeed, I am the only female who sleeps within the fortress.

I must now think of closing this letter, as preparations for departure must be attended to. We are now about to wander in the stupendous mountain-chains which I have been looking at for months from my windows. I shall not fail in my promise of giving you an account of any little incident that may take place, that is, if I am not made prisoner by some of the tribes we may meet with. I may be taken for a Kirghis, stolen from some distant aoul and disguised in, I will not say European, but an unknown costume. I look

as scraggy and almost as haggard as any of their own beauties; I am nothing but skin and bone; scarcely a pound of flesh left on me, nor is my husband one whit better. I often think, could we be carried on the shoulders of an efreet and deposited in the streets of London, what would the people think of us?

Before closing, I will tell you of a walk I took to-day across the steppe to a little sheltered valley, where I now go daily to gather sweet wild flowers. I was more than a mile from the fortress, wending my solitary way, lost in thought, the baby dozing in my arms, when I was suddenly recalled to my senses by an enormous snake rearing itself up in an erect position, and making a loud and prolonged hissing, about two yards in front of me. You may guess that I quickly recoiled. Had the reptile not reared itself, it might have bitten me, for I never saw it; I looked around for a stick to strike the brute with, but nothing was to be seen. I did not feel inclined to let it go free, so cast my eyes around for somebody, when luckily I saw a man on horseback. I hallooed as loud as I could; it was a vain effort, I might have remained silent. The man was going in the direction of the mountains. I watched him for some time, and when he at length looked about, I beckoned him to approach. He instantly came galloping across the plain, and proved to be a Cossack. When near enough, I enquired whether he had a whip. He looked vastly surprised at the question, but answering in the affirmative, I said, 'Will you kill me that serpent?' He was off his horse in a trice, and not long afterwards it lay dead, he swearing at it all the time;

I suppose *it did not sound so bad, being in Russian.* One day we saw no less than five of these venomous creatures playing and basking in the sun; as we drew near, they popped into a hole they had. The male portion of our party alighted, and shot into the hole, no doubt killing them. A little farther on were several more; some they killed with their whips, others escaped. They searched in all directions, but could not find them. I cannot say they are pleasant neighbours.

CHAPTER VII.

Toil and Travel—Writing, a Boon—Value of a Post Office—A hardy little Fellow—A Superstition—Contriving a Wardrobe—A Mother's Maxims—Chinese Silk—A Bath—A true Briton—A Weather Prophet—Novel Present—A Baby Pie!—Extraordinary Remedy—Hooping-Cough and Measles unknown—A wretched Conveyance—Sacred Mountain—Tradition concerning it—Arrive at Arasan—Astonishing Request—Our affectionate Cossack Nurse—Sorrowful Farewell—Vast Herds of Cattle—A Precipice—Beautiful Scenery—Goodness of Nature—A roaring Torrent—Reach the Sarcand—A frail Bridge—Stupendous Mountain Passes—Start for the Bascan—Fearful Thunderstorm—Interesting Capture—A sacred Animal—A wonder-struck Sultan—Old Acquaintances—Presents to the Child—Surprise and Unbelief at a European Woman—Enormous Child—A Contrast—Institution for Husbands—A modest Request—Ingenuity of the Russians—A singular Place—Enchanting Scene—A pastoral Land—Descent of the Lepsou—A Land of Enchantment—Another Thunderstorm—Painful Accident—The Verdigris Lake—Unexpected Conflict—A critical Position—Sanguinary Encounter—A Rascal leniently treated—Dangerous Descent—Doubtful Companions—God's Omniscience—A friendly Visit—Making Merry—A penitent Host—Necessary Precautions—Groundless Fears—The Jassel-kool—A delightful Stream—A faithful Attendant—Kalmuk Fortress—Valley of the Lepsou—Mosquitoes—Overpowering Heat—Return to the Mountain—Dawn of Day—Alatau's Costume—Fancied Return to Civilisation.

Barnaoul, December, 1849.

SINCE last writing to you, many a hard day's toil have I endured. There were mountains to ascend and descend, rivers to swim, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, to suffer, and still I have survived all. I am

not yet, as you imagined, dead. The idea of your writing to Colonel Sokoloffsky, to know whether we had gone to the land of spirits, amused me. No! we are still cumberers of this earth, and I trust we shall be so till you and I meet once more. The art of writing is a great boon to us, and I often bless the discoverer of it; as by our pens we are able to convey to those far from us some of our thoughts and feelings. Still, in comparison, how little it is we can say of all that happens to us. There are times when the events of a single day are sufficient to fill a volume; and then it is so much easier for me to talk than to write; still, I will do my best in endeavouring to make you acquainted with all that has taken place during the past six months, whilst we are here in Barnaoul, as we shall not leave till the spring. We have still far to wander; we shall visit Irkoutsk and the regions round about, so that it will be some time ere you see me.

Four of your letters reached me at once in Zmeinogorsk, one near a year after its date; and my husband received one from England, which is also an old one: but it could not be otherwise, as no letters could have reached us on our journey. As yet, the Kirghis do not understand the value of a post, nor do they condescend to write letters; all their communications are verbal, and delivered in a tone of voice that would startle you; as the louder the noise is, the greater mark of respect it is considered. I will at once plead guilty to your charge of not writing, and try to do better this winter; but I may add that in summer it is really impossible to write, or, rather, to send letters to you. Nevertheless I

cannot plead guilty to the charge some of my friends make against me, of saying little about Alatau. I think my letters must have miscarried.

Many and various were the questions my friends here had to ask about the child; they are all amused at his name. Madame Sokoloffsky says the fable is now reversed: that instead of 'a mountain bringing forth a *mouse*,' it is a *mouse* who has brought forth a mountain.

None of our friends expected to see him. Whilst in Kopal, they sent me a tiny counterpane and a jacket. It appears they had arranged to make him a little trousseau, knowing I could procure nothing where I was; but they reflected that he could not possibly live, and forbore carrying out their good intention, believing these little articles would only be a source of pain and regret; but, thanks to the Giver of all good! I have carried him safely. He is a hardy little fellow, and a more healthy one it would be difficult to find.

All are interested in knowing how I managed to clothe him. At first it was difficult. When asked what he was to be wrapped in, I, after a moment's thought, bid them take his father's shirt. My friends here laugh, and say I could not have done a better or a *wiser* thing, as it is one of their superstitions, that if a child is enveloped in its father's shirt it is sure to be *lucky*; and, I having done so accidentally, he will be most fortunate, and rise to great riches! I have had to tell them that I fabricated two small caps out of a piece of muslin the first day I sat up—one for night, and one for day. The following day I began two night dresses, which are day

dresses also, out of a dressing-gown of mine; and an old shirt of his father's I turned into little shirts. This completed his wardrobe.

At half-past four he was bathed, at five he was in bed, when I turned to and performed the duties of a laundress, as mine could not take the things twice in the day to wash; between six and seven in the morning he had another bath and clean clothing, and, that taken off, underwent the same process, and was made ready for night. In Kopal they considered me very silly for washing so often, saying once in two days was quite often enough to change: but the maxims of a mother are not easily forgotten; and mine had so instilled into my mind the necessity of cleanliness in my youth, that I determined to follow her injunctions. And, believe me, I am well repaid for my trouble, by the health of my child; he has never given me one day's uneasiness, nor one restless night, since his birth.

Just before starting from Kopal, I bought from a Tartar a piece of Chinese silk, of which I composed a travelling dress for my little man, and lined the coat with dabi (unspun cotton). Whilst sewing the silk, I was in a fearful state from the dye. The idea of dressing the child in anything of the kind was not to be thought of; after fretting myself for a moment, I, to my husband's astonishment and horror, got a vessel of water and plunged the whole piece of silk into it. After passing through about fifteen waters, it came out far prettier than when I bought it; true, it was flimsy, but it was now clean and glossy, and certainly most serviceable has it been. Such articles as these are

brought from China, to be disposed of to the poor Kirghis.

On the second day after the child's birth, Madame Tetchinskoy asked if I should like a bath. I was enchanted, and replied yes. As it was evening, she thought I had better put it off till the morrow, as there might be a little difficulty in getting hot water. As the time drew near, I looked anxiously for its coming. About eleven on the morning of the third day, she came herself in her *carriage* (a kind of porter's truck at a railway, drawn by a bull). On entering, she said all was ready. 'What do you mean?' I enquired. 'Why, the bath! will you not go to it?' '*Go* to the bath!' I said, quite aghast at the proposal. The snow was thick on the ground, and, moreover, it was piercingly cold. I had been to it once, so knew what I had to encounter. I should have had to strip in a shed, where, even in fine weather, it was unpleasant, one side being quite open to the steppe.

We both had a laugh at the mistake, she at my imagining she had a bath to bring to the house, and I at her thinking I should go to one. I understand that, by the Siberians, it is considered perfectly orthodox to go to the bath on the third day; and many, I hear, take cold from doing so, and die.

I do not believe I have told you about their wishing to swaddle the child. When first my boy was born they wished to swaddle him, but I assured them it was not customary in England. A few days afterwards, my friend seemed so much to urge the necessity of the swaddling system, that, to give her satisfaction, I con-

sented to its being done, only that I had no knowledge of anything of the kind; so forthwith she commenced with stroking down the arms and legs; then she began binding him, but he very shortly showed her that he was a true Briton, and was not going to stand any such treatment, for he fought bravely, so much so that the bandaging was given up. Looking innocently into my face, she exclaimed, 'How very odd! I could not have believed it, had I not seen it; what a difference there is between English and Russian children! This proves to me they are not accustomed to swaddling.' Poor child, he was so very good; for one whole month after his birth he never once opened his eyes, he did nothing but sleep and eat; he was never up an hour except at bathing time. Even the second month I scarcely had him in my arms, and, until he was nine months old, he never had a tear in his eyes. I have seen him restless and uneasy, and it was very remarkable that this always took place before a storm: he was as good as a barometer on the road. The child's uneasiness was as certain a forerunner of the storm as possible; even our Cossacks began to remark it.

The Baron one day complimented me on the good qualities of Alatau. He said, 'When first I heard there was a child, I actually swore, such a hatred have I to screaming children; but I will do Alatau the justice to say I have never yet heard his voice,' and thereupon the Baron made him a very handsome present of Chinese silk, of a most exquisite blue. If such a reward is merited by silence, I am afraid I should never get it.

Did you ever in your life hear of such a thing as a

baby-pie? If you have lived amongst cannibals, perhaps you have; but, though the Siberians are not cannibals, still they make *baby-pies*. This singular custom first came under my notice when Alatau was about two months old; he was very restless one day when my visitor called (I knew we were going to have a storm), but she proposed he should be *baked*. 'Baked!' I shrieked. 'Yes!' Explanations were entered into, when I learned it was quite a common custom to do so; but if I did not like to have him placed in an oven, I could cover him with a crust and put him on the hot stove, when hairs would come out on the back: these plucked out, the child would be perfectly easy.

I mentioned the circumstance to a friend in this town, who tells me it is quite true that Siberian peasants bake their children. There is a particular disease they have which it is said can only be removed by baking. A crust is made of rye flour, when the child is enclosed within it, in the same way as a fowl in a pasty; leaving a small aperture for the child to breathe through; then it is placed in the oven with its door closed, but only for a few seconds, and it is said that it proves a sure remedy.

Small-pox is a disease fearfully prevalent amongst the Kirghis; many of them are awfully disfigured by it. This made us anxious to have the child vaccinated. The Baron kindly offered some vaccine which he had received from Omsk, but after three trials we were forced to give it up; it was useless tormenting the child more, when it would not take: so, trusting in Providence, we went forth amongst those very Kirghis where

the disease was raging dreadfully. I felt no fear, and only on our arrival in Zmeinogorsk did we have him vaccinated.

Hooping-cough and measles are as unknown to the wandering tribes of Asia as they are to the Siberians. Perhaps this is caused by the pure atmosphere they breathe; they are all the children of Nature, and Alatau, being one of them, has never had either.

I now go back to the afternoon of May 24th, 1849, when we cast our last look on Kopal, with its numerous surrounding tumuli, and turned our steps to the eastward. We formed a large party, as all our friends had determined to see us fairly off. The gentlemen were on horseback, but the ladies rode on a miserable machine which had been made purposely for their accommodation; it was in the form of a char-a-banc. I sat in great fear, expecting every moment to be jolted off; beside which, a number of screaming women were clutching hold of me at every instant.

We passed by the foot of a mountain sacred amongst the Kirghis, and on which I had often gazed when in Kopal. I was sorry we were not alone, and I on my horse, as I had a great wish to ascend. There is a tradition concerning it, that a lady, the daughter of a king, was famed for the many good actions she had done in her lifetime. Before death she came to this mountain to hunt, being particularly fond of the chase, and this her favourite spot; she was taken suddenly ill and died, and it was resolved she should be interred on the top. It is believed that her spirit is still permitted to wander on earth, for the benefit of mankind; that where she

treads grass grows, and thus it is that it remains green and luxuriant all the year round. In winter it contrasts singularly with the surrounding snowy peaks. When we were in Kopal the gentlemen often rode to this spot to replenish the larder. When they could procure game in no other part, here it was always to be found.

It was evening when we arrived at the Arasan, a mineral spring, where it had been arranged we should pass the night; and until bed-time right merrily did the hours roll on, in dancing, singing, bathing, &c. Though I was glad enough at having the company of friends, I was not so at their arrangements; neither male nor female had made further preparations for their stay than the bringing of night caps; neither combs, brushes, nor towels. Guess my astonishment when I was asked for mine.

On the following morning, at eleven o'clock, we bade adieu to all but Abakamoff, who rode some distance farther; he, too, parted from us as we were about to descend a pass on to the steppe. Most probably we have seen each other for the last time, as it is not likely we shall ever visit this spot again.

Our Cossack Pavil, who had been our faithful attendant for so many months, really sobbed again as he kissed Alatau for the last time. Poor fellow!—he had become quite attached to the child, having, I might almost say, nursed him from his birth, taking far more care of him than any woman would have done; and, besides, they were excellent friends. Pavil was only a youth of about twenty. Often has he stood by me,

talking of his home and his mother whom he had left, and how much he wished to see her. He appeared pleased to find one who was a willing listener to his tales of home.

I have seen this youth stand for hours of an evening, watching Mr. Atkinson paint, and sometimes he has put a question to him which showed he had really a knowledge of the art. We, too, felt sorrow on bidding farewell to Pavil.

After leaving our friends, we had a succession of bad weather. But here we were leading once more our wandering life; taking up our abode with the Kirghis, and even travelling in company with them. On this journey I saw the vast herds of cattle possessed by these people. I was particularly struck at seeing sheep with four horns, and, on enquiry, learned that it was of frequent occurrence.

We had now a pass to ascend to reach the higher ranges of mountains. As we drew near the top of it, we were enveloped in thick clouds, which gave us a thorough wetting; we could not see ten paces beyond. We kept going on, till the barking of dogs induced all the party to see if there was not a descent somewhere, as the sound came from below; we turned towards it, and shortly came upon a aoul. The tribe were on their march to the upper regions, but had been obliged on account of the fog to turn into this nook, where, but for the dogs, we should never have found them. Here we passed a night. On rising and going out in the morning, we found, a short distance from us, that we were on the brink of a precipice looking on to

the steppe, 5,000 feet below us. It was like a map; we saw the rivers Sarcand, Bascan, and Acsou, shining like threads of silver, until they were lost in the haze towards the Balkash. The higher summits near us were still capped in the clouds.

We now started on our way to the Acsou, but found it very cold over the tops of the mountains. It would take much time to tell you of all the beautiful scenery we passed through this day, of the lovely sheltered valleys, of the magnificent waterfalls, of the ascents and descents, at times the tracks so slippery that our horses could not stand, but were obliged to be led down; of the narrow paths running along rocks almost perpendicular, with the boiling torrent more than a thousand feet below us; of the slopes of the mountains covered with shrubs and flowers, far more beautiful than in many gardens, Nature doing everything without the aid of man. We found here the *yellow* rose in great abundance. I gathered them in large quantities: of some I merely dried the leaves, of others I pressed the flowers, but after all my care and trouble I have scarcely saved a flower of any kind; all were spoiled in crossing the rivers. Then we came upon a large, yellow, sweet-scented poppy; the peony we found both in the glens and on the tops of the lower range of mountains; the cowslip covered acres in dense masses. Then there was an abundance of pink primroses, with a variety of other flowers. The shrubs appeared of every colour; how I envied my husband his knowledge of botany. I was only able to admire, and I did admire, the surrounding beauty, and almost envied those who dwelt in such lovely places.

There is also plenty of wild fruit, gooseberries, black and red currants, peaches, strawberries, raspberries, apples, and other kinds of fruit, of which I did not know even the name. Will you credit such a thing—the Kirghis never eat them! On asking one of them why he did not do so, he replied, 'Vegetables and fruit are for birds and beasts, and *they* are for man.'

On reaching the Acsou, we rode up the chasm as far as the horses could go, when we found the river running between perpendicular rocks, without leaving a spot where man could rest his foot. And a roaring torrent it was; it came tumbling over large rocks with frightful speed: nothing could live in it. We saw large trees snapped asunder in their passage down. It is fearful to stand and contemplate such places. On June 2nd, we reached the Sarcand, and pitched our tent, intending to cross the following morning, as it was a difficult matter to do so on so frail a bridge as the Kirghis had constructed here, being nothing more than a few trees laid across the stream from a large stone near its centre; but the rising of the water made us fear that even this simple crossing might be swept away ere morning, and we concluded it would be wiser to take advantage of the present time. The crossing was not agreeable, seeing the raging torrent under our horses' feet. One false step, and all would have been finished. The noise of the stones being brought down, and the roar of the torrent, was so deafening, that we were obliged to go close up to each other to hear a word that was spoken. At last it became really painful; the head appeared full to bursting. I walked away some

distance to try and get a little relief, but it was useless; a verst from the river the roar was still painfully heard. This din, coupled with the thunder, was awful; the latter we had almost daily — indeed, when it did not take place, there seemed to be a want in our life — and in these stupendous mountain masses it was fearfully grand, there being a short heavy growl in the distance, as if the spirits of the storm were crushing huge mountains together, and grinding them to powder; and the lightning descended in thick streams.

After visiting all the interesting points in the vicinity of the Sarcand, we started on the 8th for the Bascan. As we drew near we were greeted by our constant companion, a thunderstorm, and a fearful one it was. A young maral had apparently been so frightened by it, that she descended the mountain, and came close to the yourts. The Kirghis saw her, and immediately gave chase with loud shouting; the Cossacks followed her up the gorge, galloping like so many furies. They soon returned, bringing her alive and uninjured: the beautiful creature was presented to me. As soon as Alatau was in bed, I went into the Cossacks' tent to see her; they were trying to feed her on milk, but she would not take it. I approached the innocent creature and caressed it, when it tried to take a little of the milk, but could not. I suggested that it would be better to set her at liberty; she was too young to be taken from the mother. The men said they would do so when they had caught the mother. In the night she would come down and commence crying after her child; they would soon catch her, as she would never

leave the spot so long as she knew her young one was there, and who would be sure to answer. When they told me this, I was more anxious than ever that she should be released. My heart bled for the mother; I was one myself. I felt there was no danger or difficulty that that mother would not encounter for the sake of her young; and then came the thought, what would the little thing do without her. I again entreated that they would set it at liberty, which they promised to do a little later, when the storm was over; but the mother might be caught in the meantime!

I left them to seek for some light blue ribbons I had, which, to the great amusement of the Kirghis, I tied round the maral's neck. The colour contrasted beautifully with her coat. As I was occupied in doing this she raised her large soft eyes so piteously to my face, that before leaving her I placed my arm round her neck to embrace her, and at the same time loosened the cord she was tied with. I left the tent, and I had scarcely related to my husband what I had done when a shouting was heard outside. We both rushed to the door of the tent, and saw to my delight the graceful animal bounding up the side of the mountain; the Cossacks and some Kirghis followed on horseback, hoping to turn her up the gorge, and so capture her again. But no; she heard, as we all heard, the mother's voice high up on the mountain side, probably encouraging her offspring to advance. Months later I found cause to rejoice, for I learned my little protégé was taken for a sacred animal. She had been seen with her mother by many Kirghis, who forbore shooting her. Those who met her

at a later period found her without her mother. The tale of the sacred animal was always related with great gravity. When told by the Cossacks that I had tied the ribbon round her, they would not believe it, declaring she had been born so.

I told you my husband's flute was the admiration of the Kirghis, as well as of the Kalmuks. One of the sultans with whom we had been staying on our road, and who was wonderstruck with it, arrived after a two days' journey, with a few of his followers, to hear it played once more. He then asked for permission to play it himself. After many trials he returned it, saying he would have nothing more to do with it — that it was Shaitan, and he believed Mr. Atkinson had dealings with him, because, if not, why did the flute not answer to him when he whispered to it. Mr. Atkinson again played on it, and once more offered it to the sultan, but he declined touching it.

Far up in the mountains we met with many Kirghis, whose acquaintance we had made at our first entry into the steppe. All showed joy at seeing us again, and most charmed to make the acquaintance of the boy. How lucky it is that he is a boy, and not a girl; the latter are most insignificant articles of barter. I am scarcely ever looked at excepting by the poor women, but the boy is somebody. The sultans wished to keep him: they declared he belonged to them; he was born in their territories, had been fed by their sheep and wild animals, ridden their horses, and had received their name; therefore he belonged to them, and ought to be left in their country to become a great chief. The presents

the child received whilst amongst them were marvellous: pieces of silk (which, by the way, I mean to appropriate to myself), pieces of Bokharian material for dressing gowns, *lambs* without end, goats to ride upon, and on which they seat him and trot him round the yourts; one woman holding him, whilst another led the animal. And one sultan said, if I would leave him, he would give him a stud of horses and attendants; but I have vanity enough to suppose my child is destined to act a nobler rôle on this world's stage than the planning of Barantas, or living more like a beast than a man, and passing his days in sleepy indolence. Still he is to be envied, lucky boy! Why was I not born a boy instead of a girl?—still, had it been so, I should not have been the fortunate mortal I am now—that is, the wife of my husband and the mother of my boy. But, I pray you, do not make them acquainted with my feelings; they are both capable of taking advantage of the knowledge you would impart.

There was a circumstance which I must tell you. Some of the tribes we came upon had never seen a European woman; but these believed I was *not* a woman, and that, I *being a man*, we were *curiosities* of *nature*; that Allah was to be praised for his wonderful works—*two men* to have a baby! One of our Cossacks I thought would have dropped from his horse with laughter. I was obliged to doff my hat, unfasten my hair, and let it stream around me, to try and convince them; but this did not at first satisfy them, still I believe at last I left them under a conviction that I was not the wonderful being they had first imagined me to be. My stays were

objects of much speculation; they imagined they were never taken off. When told they were usually worn with steel, and that we took them off nightly, they were astounded; their exclamations were many and various.

One of the women took me to see her baby. It was only about a month old, but what an enormous child! In England we have fine children, but this one surpassed all I ever saw; I imagined it was a year old. Then it was strapped to a board quite naked, with furs above and below, and on this board the child is kept till it is able to crawl about and assist itself. They are never washed from the hour of birth, or a drain of water come near them (excepting it be a drenching rain), till they arrive at an age to be capable of running into a stream and taking care of themselves. I observed that the mother fed her baby by stooping over it; she told me that it was ill, and requested me to give her medicine. My husband prescribed some slight remedy, which I administered, to the infinite delight of the mother, who took my hands in both hers, and, pressing them, appeared very happy.

I could not help remarking the difference between a Kirghis nursery and an English one, where everything is clean and neat, and white. And a mother also: as the hour of her accouchement draws nigh, it is stated she is possessed of the devil, and they beat her with sticks to drive him away; and as the moment approaches, they call on the evil spirit to leave her. Poor woman! her lot in a future existence, it is to be hoped, will be an easier one, as here she is a true slave to man, contributing to his pleasure in every way, supplying all his

wants, attending to his cattle, saddling his horse, fixing the tents, and I have even seen the women helping these 'lords of the creation' into the saddle.

My husband says the Kirghis have opened his eyes to what is due to husbands, and he is half inclined to profit by the lesson; and even thinks of opening an institution to teach husbands how to manage their wives, and believes it might be made a profitable concern. Would you like an appointment in the establishment? He says it will succeed well, and is much required in England.

Do fancy, for a moment, what a position a woman fills. A dog is even considered her superior. When a favourite one is going to have pups, carpets and cushions are given her to lie upon; it is stroked, caressed, and fed upon the best of everything. Woman alone must toil, and they do so very patiently. One Kirghis, seeing me busy sewing (indeed I was occupied in making a coat for my husband), became so enamoured of my *fingers* that he asked Mr. Atkinson whether he would be willing to sell me; he decidedly did not know the animal, or he would not have attempted to make the bargain. With me amongst them, there would shortly have been a rebellion in the camp.

I one day became greatly alarmed. Mr. Atkinson was taken suddenly ill: he had been sketching in the sun for a long time, whilst I was under shelter. The Cossacks are really good creatures; they were greatly concerned about him, and immediately proposed making him a bath. The Russians are a most ingenious people. They dug a hole in the ground, and over this placed

stones, and underneath they put wood, thus the stones became red-hot; then all was covered with a voilock quite low, so that they had to creep in; afterwards cold water was thrown over the stones, making a tremendous steam. Here the patient was taken; they laid him on the ground, and gave him a thorough stewing, and for which he felt all the better, walking back quite briskly. True, he might have been suffering from cold, as we had been for many days travelling amongst the snowy mountains, and the change from an almost tropical climate to the snowy ridges, and then back again, had a greater effect on him than on me. The only inconvenience I felt was a difficulty in respiration, when far above the snow line.

What kept the child and myself in such perfect health was the constant bathing in cold water; the ice had often and often to be broken to allow us to plunge in, whereas my husband could not stand it so well.

I must now tell you of a singular place we came upon in the mountains, but before we reached it I made the remark, as we rode along, that the rocks protruding through the grass looked as though they had at one time been boiling up. When we arrived at the place I speak of, we found a stupendous mass of circular granite rocks, and entered what appeared to be an immense portal, which admitted us into a vast space, surrounded by granite rocks of most picturesque forms, while in the centre rose up a large mass of rock of a conical shape, which appeared either to have been the summit that had sunk down, or a mass thrown up in the centre of what really appeared

a crater. On going round we found a second circle; it was ruggedness and beauty combined. On wandering over it one felt oppressed at the idea of the power which had produced such terrific effects. We termed this place the granite crater: it is a spot which will long be remembered by both of us.

Here we saw a sunset over the steppe, than which I never saw anything more enchanting. The steppe was spread out like a map, the rivers looking like threads of silver, whilst towards the Balkash lay a boundless dreary waste, where at this time of the year it would be frightful to travel; then the golden tints of the sky I try in vain to find language to describe. Those who have not visited these regions can form no conception of the splendour of an evening scene over the steppe.

On riding amongst these granite ridges, one constantly comes upon the most lovely spots. Nature has designed them for gardens, and she has not been sparing in flowers either, to adorn these places. The ground is covered with short green sward, and flowers of every tint are growing, even down to the little pansy (this flower we frequently met with close to the snow), and higher up in the rocks fruit is growing in large quantities. The most remarkable thing to me was, that often whilst sitting in tropical luxuriance, we saw snow falling a short distance from us.

To return to our granite crater: I do not know that I ever saw anything more picturesque, or more pastoral-like, than the Kirghis with their cattle at this spot. The sheep and goats ever wander together; indeed, the

former will never go to the pastures without the latter, who always have bells round their necks; and to hear the tinkling of these little bells in the silence of this marvellous spot was striking; and then to watch them ascending the precipices, the goats far in advance of their followers, who stood looking after their leaders in stupid wonderment at the places they were able to attain, and which even filled us with amazement: they seemed to bound and leap from crag to rock, and, almost like flies, to cling to the face of them. And above these we saw upwards of fifty gazelles standing together on what appeared the summit of the mountain; they faced us in a semicircle, as there was an indentation in the mountain. These graceful creatures stood looking at us, seeming as though they would set us at defiance, and as if they knew no harm could reach them where they were. They remained perfectly quiet for above ten minutes, and then scampered off like lightning. We presently saw what had disturbed them. Almost immediately below where they were standing, out from some brushwood, came an enormous wild sheep, with his splendid curled horns; he was a grand fellow to look at. Our Cossacks were in an awful state of excitement at not being able to reach him. Even Mr. Atkinson was not calm on the subject. But they all knew it would have been madness to make the attempt; the face of the mountain was almost perpendicular.

After leaving the granite crater, we came to a part where Mr. Atkinson wished to descend to the Lepsou, the gorge of which we saw below; we kept descending

very rapidly, but winding round little mountains of granite, frequently returning to the same point, but very far below. Between these masses of granite we found Kirghis, with their sheep and camels, feeding. It was a matter of astonishment how they reached the point where we saw them; it seemed almost impossible to do so. As we descended lower, we found the dwarf cedar creeping over the granite, and lower down birch, aspen, and poplar. After this we had a great difficulty in finding our way, but we did so; the descent was both steep and dangerous. In a former letter I described (or tried to do) our descent to the Katoonia; that was baby play to what we encountered in these mountains. Sometimes it was positively terrific; no description of mine can give you the faintest conception of the route. The Kirghis are most daring riders; sitting on horseback, they literally appear a part of the animal. At length we reached the brink of the gorge. Immediately below us lay a lake, the colour of which I compared to verdigris; we were so high above it that we could not perceive the slightest motion in the water.

A Kirghis made his appearance, and seeing we were about to attempt a descent, said it was utterly impossible to do so. Finding Mr. Atkinson was determined to try, he told us we could reach it by going up the river Lepsou. This appeared feasible, so we turned our horses on to the old track, and after a descent of four hours arrived at the Lepsou, a most fertile and lovely spot. We were surprised, but greatly pleased, to find Kirghis. We now held a council, when one and all declared that

it was perfectly impracticable to reach the lake from that point. In September, when all was frozen in the Actau, it might be done; but in June we should all be lost in crossing and re-crossing the rapids, which we should have to do at least fifty times. We therefore determined to return by our old track, but before doing so my husband proceeded with a man to see how far it was possible to ascend, and found that he could not go more than a verst; the rocks were perpendicular to an enormous height, and the water roaring and foaming at their base: it required no further proof.

We left one Cossack in charge of our baggage, and took the other two with us, with what we should require for a night or so. We now commenced re-ascending the mountain; it proved very difficult for the horses and camels, but the scenes were highly interesting, being quite changed. It seemed a mystery how this extraordinary place had been formed; we came upon huge blocks of granite, all piled up in confusion, some appearing ready to fall and crush all beneath, others were like the remains of some gigantic statues, and, again, others like the ruins of some mighty city. One almost felt as if in a land of enchantment. At length we reached the summit, but it took us double the time it did to descend. We now once more saw our old friend the Actau towering above us; its white peaks shining like burnished silver. Here we made up our minds to stay the night, as a fearful thunderstorm came on, accompanied by rain and hail, and in the morning, on rising, we found the ground covered with snow six inches deep, giving every place a winterly aspect; and

moreover, whilst at breakfast, a Cossack came to tell us that a camel had just fallen a little below, against the rocks, and was killed on the spot, an event which reconciled us to some delay. It was now impossible to move. We could have gone on towards the lake, but to attempt a descent would have been madness. We were a little fretful, but this did not mend matters; and what was worse, clouds began to rise thickly from the valley, which obscured everything around. About twelve o'clock they began to draw up like a curtain, first giving us a peep at the lake, and gradually ascending, until we had all the mountains, as well as steppe, in view. We now hastened dinner, so as to get on the road again. Whilst we were occupied eating it we heard a great noise as if many people were wailing, and on running out of our yourt, we learned the cause of the uproar. A man had just arrived to say that eight horses had fallen down the mountain and were killed; three of them mares with foal. It was quite painful to listen to these poor creatures, to whom one was unable to afford even the slightest comfort. We now determined to await the morrow, fearing to meet with a like disaster; still it was unpleasant to be prisoners on the brink of such a gulf as the one on which we were situated.

The following morning was bright and sunny, giving us hopes of escape from our rocky prison. The Kirghis now intimated that it would be better to place our baggage on bulls, they being safer than camels for a slippery descent. Whilst the men and one Cossack were occupied in this business, we proceeded on horseback to the spot

whence we had seen the Verdigris Lake for the first time. We had some steep rocks to ascend before we began the descent; and as it was exceedingly slippery, and difficult for our horses to stand, our progress was slow, but we reached the summit in safety. We now commenced descending, but found it impossible on horseback; we therefore dismounted, and giving the horses to a man to lead down, we proceeded on foot, Mr. Atkinson taking Alatau, and the Cossack aiding me. In a couple of hours we arrived at a small plateau, where to our surprise we found sheltered yourts; from above we saw no sign of them. This rather astonished us, as all had declared it was impossible to descend; but my husband does not permit impossibilities, without proving them to be so himself. There were about eight yourts, and we were, as usual, received with the barking of dogs.

It was a most enchanting spot they had chosen,—a perfect little Paradise. I was in ecstasies, and taking the child, seated myself on the brink of the precipice. It was a fearful sight to cast the eyes below. The head seemed to grow giddy, and the heart throbbed quickly, at the frightful depth: where I was sitting, it was as near as possible perpendicular down to the lake. After standing for some little time contemplating this grand but rugged scene, Mr. Atkinson placed his gun beside me, and walked away to choose a spot on which to erect our tent, intending to make this place our head-quarters. I continued gazing, lost in wonder at the sublimity of the prospect; it was finer than anything I had ever looked upon before. At length turning to

see what he was about so long, I was fearfully startled. I beheld the Cossack surrounded by several men with sticks; Mr. Atkinson hastening to his assistance; and other men seizing sticks, and moving forward to join their companions. Then I observed women throwing their arms wildly about them, and hurrying to the scene of conflict. Not a sound of what was going on reached me, I was far too distant; and, besides, all noise was drowned in the murmur of a waterfall, which I could hear, but not see. Neither of my party was armed; they had nothing more than their whips. I considered what was best to be done (my heart beating rapidly all the time). At first I thought of putting the child down, and running with the gun, and then I reflected he might roll over the brink before my return. If I took him with me, and the Kirghis saw me first, they might rush forward and seize the weapon; as with the two in my arms I should have no chance of outstripping my foes, although alone I should soon have done so. In this dilemma, I concluded it would be safer to trust in Providence, and sit perfectly still.

I now observed the men brandishing their sticks aloft, while the Cossack and my husband were facing their foes, but slowly retreating. The enemy, more especially the women, were following up like demons. At this instant our other Cossack, who had been left with the bulls, turned the corner of a mass of rock, and glancing below, saw, and understood in an instant, the critical position we were in. Without a moment's hesitation, he rode straight down; how he was not dashed to pieces, is to me at this moment marvellous. No sooner did the

Kirghis see him, than they closed round the Cossack and Mr. Atkinson. The former I saw was struggling with the leader, and a woman clinging on to him from behind. Now this Cossack was a little fellow, and being unable to extricate his head from the grasp of the woman, turned, and with one hand gave her a blow; it must have been a terrible one, for she was instantly knocked down. Two of her companions left the combatants, and carried her away. Whilst this was passing two men had seized Mr. Atkinson, and attempted to pinion his arms behind him. I think they scarcely knew what a powerful man they had to deal with; he quickly flung them off, and disengaged himself. The Cossack now arrived; he had on his shoulder a rifle belonging to my husband. To seize hold of it, and point it at the enemy, formed the work of a moment; but seemed to produce no effect. The Kirghis who was leading the horses down now appeared, and on reaching the bottom Mr. Atkinson backed towards him, and before they were aware of what he was about to do, removed his pistols from the holsters, cocked and pointed them. No sooner did they see the four muzzles directed towards them, than they dropped their poles and doffed their caps in submission. I now supposed we were safe, and masters of the field. I therefore jumped up, and taking the double-barrelled gun, walked with the child in my arms towards the scene of conflict.

What a sight was there! On approaching, I heard the howling of the women, and on getting nearer I saw several with blood on their faces. Our little Cossack

was pale, and breathless with the exertions he had used; blood was on his face, and his clothes were torn; but both he and the Kirghis had hold of, and had managed to bind with thongs, the leader, who proved to be master of the aoul. A more horrible sight I never witnessed; the man was actually foaming from the mouth. I could scarcely endure to look at him. The women brought water, but our two men would not allow them to approach. I, therefore, handed it, and now learned the particulars of the fray.

This man, who, as we afterwards learned, was a very bad fellow, had taken possession of this spot, and having determined that neither Russians nor anyone else should approach him, had called his people around him, urging them to kill us, and throw us over into the lake, when they could possess themselves of our effects and arms, and no one would know what had become of us. The sticks they had in their hands were the yourt poles, which he had ordered to be broken up to knock our brains out with.

This man, whose struggles it appeared had been awful, now became penitent, and promised not to interfere with us. Mr. Atkinson gave directions that he should be unbound; but the Cossacks were loth to liberate him, saying he was a mad robber, and would make another attempt on our lives. Still my husband insisted, and the thongs were loosened. We then retired to our tent, when this man went with several of his followers, and seated himself on a mass of rock at the edge of the precipice. After awhile he once more commenced haranguing them, and, talking loudly,

kept pointing down towards the lake. One of the Cossacks entered, saying the fellow was still bent on mischief, and urging the men to kill us.

I suggested the necessity of speed, and that we should quit this place as soon as possible. We were drinking tea, when I was surprised at the entrance of our discourteous host into the tent; he seated himself, and I handed tea, which he declined taking. One of the Cossacks had followed him in; he said they also had offered tea, but he refused. He now commenced fingering and looking at everything we had; the guns and pistols especially had charms for him. Much to the surprise of the Cossack and myself, my husband allowed him to handle them.

Mr. Atkinson now prepared his sketching materials, to descend to the lake; and asked him for two men from the aoul to accompany him; these he readily consented to let him have. I insisted on his taking at least one Cossack, but no persuasions of mine could induce him to do so; he was firm in the decision he had come to—viz., the leaving them, with our own Kirghis, as a guard for myself and the boy; the only concession he made to my entreaties was, to at least keep the men in front of him. This he did, and forthwith commenced the descent, which was very precipitous. I seated myself on the edge of the precipice, and watched till I could no longer distinguish them. I then looked at them with my opera-glass. This the master of the aoul observed, and began making signs to me, which I would not understand. After awhile he approached me, so I arose from my seat, determined to show no fear, and stood

perfectly still, merely placing my hand in my pocket and grasping my pistol, but without drawing it forth. I should have been under no apprehension, had I not observed one of the men going backwards and forwards to the principal yourt; and then a woman came and tried to induce me to go back. This I stoutly refused to do, believing they wanted to make us prisoners, or, at least, the child. However, the man asked for the glass; this I gave him, and he returned to his former post on the rock. He now commenced looking towards the travellers, and seemed thunderstruck. He then looked at them with the naked eye, and then again with the glass, his face all this time undergoing a variety of changes which it was amusing to see. He then passed it to his followers, who all looked through it, each one appearing more amazed than his neighbour. At length he returned it to me, repeating many times Yak-she (good).

I took the glass, to see if I could distinguish my husband. I could discern nothing more than the horses, no bigger than ants; and should not have known them, but that the spots I saw were not stationary. At last they descended still lower, and I lost sight of them altogether.

Amongst this grand mountain scenery I seemed to conceive a more vivid idea of the power and presence of the Deity; and then I felt that the beneficent Being who had called all I saw around me into existence, did not neglect to watch and guard even the least of His creatures, if they trusted in Him. What care had been bestowed upon us this very day! We had

but three opposed to upwards of twenty, besides women, and my heart swelled with gratitude for our deliverance. My reflections were, however, disturbed by my observing that the men were leaving the rock. They went towards their yourt; and shortly after, a woman, I presumed one of the wives of our host, came towards me. I again grasped my pistol, but this was not an unfriendly visit, for she brought a Chinese silk handkerchief with a mother-of-pearl decoration, and presented them to the boy. After she left, I sent one of the Cossacks with the child's red hat, which I had made him in Kopal, as a present to one of the children. Had I offered a bar of gold, it would not have given half the pleasure this hat did. Alatau had now a felt one, which I had procured from a Tartar, decidedly more useful, but nothing like so fine as the one I had made.

Our host, for he really turned out to be so, had had a sheep killed, and all, after the conflict, were going to make merry. It was nearly dusk when my husband returned to his dinner, and the man who had intended we should be his victims went forward to meet him and shake him by the hands. 'A change had come over the spirit of the dream;' he now entered our yourt, and when I offered a glass of tea, accepted it, and appeared scarcely to know what to do, or how to render himself amiable enough. But all this did not prevent our taking precautions for the night, in case of an attack being made. I prepared so far as to place my last piece of tallow candle by my side, with the matches. I was awakened in the night by a noise; I was certain some one

was in the yourt. I sat up and listened, I heard the sentinel walking to and fro without, and supposed it was only my imagination; still I determined to strike a light, but when I sought for my candle it was gone. I now was startled in earnest—some one had certainly been in. I had one small piece of stearine in my box, so I got up and searched for it, and then lay down, holding it in my hand, together with the matches; but night passed, and morning dawned, without anything new taking place. We had a good laugh, for I recollected it must have been the dogs that had slipped under in the night and stolen the candle, as it proved to be, by the way they had disturbed the voilock.

On the following morning Mr. Atkinson wished to descend to the lake once more, to sketch it from another point. Our host urged us to stay longer, but we declined.

The cause of the peculiar colour of the water we could not ascertain. The lake was about three quarters of a verst wide, and two to two and a half long; and the Kirghis said it was as deep as the mountain was high, but that we could not believe, though evidently the depth was great. They called it the Jassel-kool, which, translated, means young lake; perhaps a lake newly formed by an earthquake, as the rocks appeared tossed about in great confusion.

On leaving this place our host determined upon accompanying us, to see us in safety on our road; he likewise indicated where we might find Kirghis, as we resolved on changing our route, and not returning by the way we came. Just as the sun was setting we arrived

at a lovely spot on the granite mountain; it was a small stream running between grassy banks, in other parts finding its course under huge blocks of fallen rock.

Only on the seventh day after quitting our Cossack on the Lepsou did we return to him. He was greatly pleased at seeing us; he had already begun to fear for our safety, imagining we were lost in the intricacies of the mountains. That night I do not believe our men closed their eyes; so busy were they in discussing the events of the last few days.

We now prepared to descend to the steppe, to visit an old Kalmuk fortress situated on the Lepsou. All the way along the banks of this river we found Kirghis encamped; they were gradually returning from the mountains. Many amongst them were old acquaintances; and numerous were the invitations to stop and feast, but after the usual salutations we were forced to continue our route. We also found an old friend whom we had often met in Kopal, sultan Boulania, one of the chief men of the steppe; with him we were forced to dismount and take tea. He told us we should find it unbearable on the steppe at this time of the year, July 2nd; but we had made up our minds to go.

I was charmed with our ride along the valley of the Lepsou. This river has several branches; we were on the most easterly one: it was finely wooded, and the river meandering so calmly along gave altogether a softness to the scene to which latterly we had been unaccustomed. We termed this the Happy Valley. Looking towards the mountains, we saw the Actau rearing his

white crests far into the clear blue sky, exhibiting a picture of both winter and summer, for the valley where we were was one carpet of flowers.

Our progress down to the plain was at times very steep and difficult. The heat became greater at every step, and then there were millions of mosquitoes, who bit us without mercy; and where we stopped, we had to fill the yourt with smoke, to drive out the enemy. As we advanced, and got glimpses of the country below, it was like a sea of yellow sand with a stripe of green along the banks of the river, which we saw winding its course till lost in the horizon.

On entering one of the ravines it was just like going into an oven, the hot blast that met us was fearful: but on reaching the plain it was still worse; the sun, and the heat reflected from the arid rocks, positively broiled us. The temperature ranged between 55° and 60° Reaumur. Whilst the yourt was being fixed my husband laid his gun on the sand, but when he went to take it up, it burnt his hand, and the blister remained for several days.

On going into the yourt I thought I should have been suffocated; and, to add to our discomfort, we were forced to have a fire to keep off the mosquitoes. Fortunately we thought of having water poured over the sand; this cooled the atmosphere a little.

Poor Alatau was in a sad state; he was one mass of bites. No one could have recognised him. I myself was not much better. I placed the little fellow in bed, perfectly naked, and covered with a piece of muslin, which we contrived to prop up; but still the brutes succeeded

in getting in, and it was impossible to sit by and watch the whole time.

Mr. Atkinson soon completed what he wished to do here, and on the morning of the third day we started back to the mountains. We were up between two and three, when I turned out to have a dip in the Lepsou, raining and dark though it was. Standing on the banks, and looking across the steppe, I witnessed the dawn, a most lovely sight. It was the first time I had ever seen it over the steppe. For a few moments I thought it was a fire, and that the rosy tints were caused by the flames gradually lighting up all around, but I was soon undeceived. Willingly would I have seated myself to watch the approaching day, but there was no time to be lost, as we had to be on our way by sunrise; it being quite impossible to travel during the great heat.

When we started early I always let Alatau rest till the men were ready to take down the tent, when I aroused the little sleeper, to bathe, dress, and feed him. His toilette was soon completed, as it consisted of nothing more than one loose dress which I had made from some Bokharian material. This he wore with a belt round his waist. He never had shoes or stockings on his feet till our return to this place (Barnaoul), and even now I have much difficulty in getting him to wear them. I very often find them on my table. He takes them off, and runs about without them; but this is quite common amongst Russian children, and is considered very healthy. They even trot about the gardens, and over the grass, without either; and not only children, but grown-up persons

do the same, and delightful, I can tell you, it is, especially on the sand.

One day we began to imagine we were back again in civilised society. We were journeying on when we met a Kirghis, who said he had had some difficulty in finding us, and that he had a letter for me. On reading it I found it contained an invitation to dinner, and was thus expressed: 'If Mr. and Madame would be so good as to dine with me to-day in the first hour, I will beg of them to bring a *pair of silver spoons* and a *pair of forks*, and *nothing* more will be wanting.'

CHAPTER VIII.

Russian Courtesy—Sumptuous Dinner—An afflicted Child—Cossack Desire for Information—Scanty Food—The Ala-kool—Intense Heat—Funeral Rites of the Kirghis—Singular Custom—A Love Ball—Enormous Appetites—A Scene of Grandeur—Effects of the Wind—Gift of a Maral—Extraordinary animal Attachment—Loss of a Pet—Chinese penal Settlements—Visit and Pursuit of Intruders—Return to Rest—Heavy Storm—A lovely Picture—Masses of Rock—Evidences of Volcanoes—Kirghis' Tombs—A treacherous Climate—Large black Eagle—Numerous Thunderstorms—Return to old Quarters—Suspicious Visitors—Exciting Chase—A determined Scoundrel—Rapid Streams—Wild Horses—A frightened Steed—Congratulations—A Halt—Devoured by Mosquitoes—A Chinese Picquet—National Costume—Polite Reception—Hasty Arrival and Departure—Interview with Officials—Affection for Children—A Desire ungratified—Chinese Interpreter—Invitation to Dinner—Alatau overwhelmed with Kisses—Taking Leave—Guard of Honour—Systematic Arrangements—Refreshing Bath—A great Delicacy—Amusing Incident—An empty Cupboard—Successful Search for Apples—Washing Contrivances—Tea-party in the Steppe—A Bride's Attire and Bridal Party—Mutual Satisfaction—Female Tea-party—Disappointed Lords of the Creation—Disparity of Age in married Couples—A Wife's Correction and Care—Beck Sultan's Daughter—A graceful Amazon—Frightful Ravages by Wolves—Parting with our Cossacks—Zmeinogorsk—Our altered Appearance—Manners and Customs—Fortune-telling—A generous Apothecary—Singular Circumstance—Providential Escape—The Hand of Providence—Filling up the Time—Approach of Christmas—Nearly suffocated.

July 8th, 1849.

THE idea was too delicious to refuse. Pelonka was a Russian merchant whose acquaintance we had made in Kopal, and whom we had also met in the moun-

tains. He had heard of us, and had sent this man to seek and take us to his aoul, which was situated near the river Tinteck (wild or savage). Our friend had chosen a lovely spot on which to encamp, and prepared for us was a very nice little yourt, fitted up exquisitely. The voilock was raised a little all round, so that a gentle breeze passed through. His wife (he was married to a Kirghis) and children soon came to visit us and to make tea, undoubtedly the best we had ever tasted; then they brought me cushions on which to repose till dinner, which I gladly did, for the day was sultry hot.

At the appointed hour dinner was forthcoming, and a sumptuous one it was; everything was clean and neat, and they tried to do all they could to make us comfortable. Here we gained a great deal of information respecting the different routes. Before quitting, our host presented Alatau with a tiny basin to drink out of. He had previously sent him, when but a week old, one still smaller, with a note stating that it was for 'the new-born babe,' which note, I regret to say, I have lost.

The atmosphere being cooled, we were anxious to be off, so I called at the yourt of Pelonka, to take leave of his wife. After sitting with her for awhile, she took me to a compartment separated by curtains, in which was their only son. He made me shudder to look at him. The child was about eight or ten years of age; his disease was the 'king's evil,' which I was told made frightful ravages among these people; his head was swollen to a dreadful size, and in an awful state. The father entered; we spoke of the little fellow, and he said, if we could

only cure the child, he would give us half his flocks. I was glad to get away—it was too painful to look upon; and for two years he had been in this state. When he was first attacked he used to play about as usual, but latterly he had taken no interest in anything.

One of our Cossacks, whom I called Columbus, was of an exceedingly inquiring mind. When we encamped for the night, and at times whilst Mr. Atkinson was sketching, he would come and squat down beside me to have a gossip. First came the never-failing question of 'Have you ever seen the Emperor?' Then he was curious to learn something of England, and our military. Geography had great charms for him, and after I showed him the different countries on the maps, he would ask me to allow him to show them to his companions. It was evident they had discussed the matter, from the questions he put to me on his return. One day he said, 'I hope I do not trouble you by putting so many questions.' I told him I was very much pleased to answer any that I was able. 'Ah!' said he, 'it is very different with you from what it is with our gentlefolks; whenever we put a question to them, they are sure to cheat us in their answers, so we never ask now for information. I am so much obliged to you for all you have taught me; in two years I am going home, and I shall have so many things to tell them.'

It was a sad blow to us when it was announced that our rusks were finished. We had now nothing left but the dust from our dried bread; and, salt though it was, we considered it a luxury. I ate my portion dry, but Mr. Atkinson poured boiling water over his, making a

sort of pap of it, which to my ideas was very nasty. We were now pleased at finding apples, though they were not yet ripe, and awfully sour. We had no sugar to eat with them. I had them boiled, and ate them like potatoes. Then we came upon rhubarb, which I stewed and ate. I was glad to get anything in the shape of vegetables. Unfortunately, this summer we missed all the fruit; where it was growing we were either too soon or too late, thus there were nothing but regrets each time we descended to their localities.

We were now journeying on to the Ala-kool. The lower we descended, the more intense became the heat; indeed, we were literally broiled. My cloth dress (I wore no petticoats) was even too much for me. The Kirghis adopt quite another mode to ours: the hotter it becomes, the more clothing they put on; and during the greatest heat they wore horse-skin shubes. I enquired if they were cold; they said they wore them to keep out the heat. I am not over sure that they are not quite right, for the sun was intense. Mr. Atkinson's hands were in a terrible state, blistered all over the backs of them. Whilst sketching, it was impossible to wear gloves. When our hats were taken off we appeared as though we had on masks; not quite black, but a nice mahogany colour. The boy was the same.

One evening we gained the aoul of some Kirghis at sunset, where we heard a good deal of sobbing, but we were too much occupied about ourselves to pay any attention to it, and afterwards I entirely forgot all about it. The following morning, as we were about to mount our horses, I heard exactly the same sounds, only more

protracted. I listened, as I was sure they were proceeding from sorrowing hearts. I learned from one of our men that the yourt whence these notes were issuing was one of mourning; they were chanting prayers for the dead. I asked if it would be indiscreet for me to enter, and was told there would be no impropriety in my doing so.

I found two women, the wives of the deceased, kneeling before a pile of baggage, saddles, &c., placed on one side of the tent; they were moving their bodies to and fro, and chanting in concord, and evidently in verse, and at the end of each verse the body was bent more forward, and for a second a stoppage, with the sound of 'ach,' or perhaps I may more and better compare it to a deep sigh. They kept time beautifully. The notes were so exceedingly musical, and so expressive of sorrow, that the tears flowed from my eyes. It made me so sad that my husband would not allow me to stay.

The husband had been dead some months, but it is usual for the women to offer up prayers for an hour, at sunrise and at sunset, during a whole year. Numbers entered whilst we were there, but took no notice of the mourners. A little child about three or four years of age began crying and making a great disturbance; then it ran to the mother; she touched and stroked it down, but without for an instant removing the fixed gaze, or staying the vibrating motion of her body. The child wanted to be fed, but she put it on one side. You would be surprised to see boys of ten and eleven years of age feeding from the mother. When I saw it I was much astonished; but I never once observed that a girl did so.

As we left the yourt of mourning, I saw there was a long pole, at the top of which was suspended a piece of black silk as a kind of flag; this always indicates death, but red denotes a sultan. We saw several standing in different parts; they were placed where a sultan has appropriated a spot to himself as a camping-ground, and to which he means to return as he descends the mountains. Thus no ordinary mortal dares intrude upon the chosen ground.

I saw a singular custom amongst these people, which is for a sultan to place in the mouth of a favourite follower pieces of meat, which he receives standing, his hands placed behind his back. These morsels are sometimes so large, that a man has been known to die; to allow it to fall from the mouth, or touch it with the hands, would be an act of great unpoliteness, which rather than be guilty of, the favourite chooses choking. I saw a man receive what I called a love ball; the meat was formed into a ball. How the mouth got stretched to the size was inconceivable, and I verily believed the poor creature would expire, but he did not.

They are a peculiar race of people, being able to remain two, and some three days, without eating, and then the quantity they can eat is enormous. I was told that a man can eat a sheep at once; on making the enquiry among the Kirghis, one of them offered to treat me with the sight if I would pay for it, but I declined witnessing the disgusting feat.

I must tell you of a pass we descended on our way to the Ala-kool; it was fearfully grand. We could see the plain at a frightful depth below us; the way down was

rugged and difficult, and, moreover, we had a storm of wind and rain. First we came upon a small torrent, which was soon lost to view under the fallen rocks, then we again came upon it running amongst small trees, while the dark grey sides of the pass rose in frowning masses to a great height, and as if they really ascended to the sky, which was barely visible above our heads. It might have been termed the Valley of Death, so gloomy and still did it seem. The state of the weather added to the feeling.

About midway down, the pass had fallen and blocked up the gorge, forming a small lake; on gaining the head of it, we looked down far into the gulf below. At this moment, the wind came rushing down the ravine with such fury, that we were really afraid of being blown over. All hastily dismounted, and crouched down by the side of the horses, who, poor animals, tottered on their legs. I had often seen the effects of the wind, but never before felt it in the same degree. Had the men not seized hold of my dress, I should doubtless have been blown away; I had no more power than if I had been a leaf wafted by the wind. We found it impossible to descend to the foot of the ravine, it became so narrow and blocked up with fallen rocks; so we managed to turn up the side of the mountain, and rode along the ridge: it was extremely difficult. The descent altogether occupied us five hours; whilst from above I imagined we should reach it in an hour.

Once more we were on the steppe, and travelling along it by the mountains. To tell you all I suffered from the heat is impossible. Suffice that at times I

thought the poor horses would sink. The wretched dogs howled again. It was terrific, and the ground we were travelling over being sand, the heat from it was intense.

I must now tell you of a maral we had. He was given to me on the Bascan; he had been caught young, and was thus perfectly tame. I used to leave him at times with the different tribes we met with, and take him up on our return from our rambles; sometimes he trotted by us, and at others his feet were tied together, and he was seated before one of the men. He was a beautiful creature, with large expressive eyes. I was much attached to him, and, moreover, his love for the child was remarkable. I had noticed, if Mr. Atkinson, of an evening when we encamped, took Alatau in his arms whilst I was occupied in *household* duties, Bascan (the name we gave the animal) ever followed them. I spoke of the circumstance, but the idea that the creature had any affection for the child was attributed to my lively imagination; so placing him down, he said, 'Now see, Bascan will follow me;' but he never moved, and lay down by the child. His father took him up. No sooner did he do so than the animal followed. This was repeated several times, before my husband was convinced.

What displeased me in Bascan was, that he would never condescend to stop in a yourt with the men, always preferring our society. One evening, Mr. Atkinson being gone for a stroll alone, I, having some sewing as well as *washing* for the child to do, did not accompany him, so was seated on the grass outside the tent to prevent Bascan entering (the boy was in bed).

He hindered me greatly, being obliged to jump up every few minutes. I therefore procured a rope, and fastened it across the door, zigzag, as high as I could reach. This effectually stopped him, so he kept wandering round and round, and each time he came to the door he checked his speed and cast longing glances at it, but my heart was obdurate—when, at one of these rounds, I was surprised at his taking a leap, and clearing the ropes. I was instantly on my feet, and darted into the tent to thrust him out, when I saw a sight that arrested my attention. The creature had bounded to the child, and lying down gracefully beside him, was reclining his chin on the bed, close to the little fellow's face. My heart would not allow me to touch him, he seemed to watch over him as though he wished to protect the boy, so I left him in peace, innocence beside innocence; after this Bascan was a privileged creature, coming in and going out at pleasure—but, alas, for poor Bascan, his fate was a sad one.

The heat on the steppe being so terrible, he had to be carried the whole distance, so we concluded it would be advisable to place him on one of the pack camels. I now and then looked to see that he was all right, but at one of my visits to his camel, I saw his head hanging down, and his tongue protruding from his mouth. I shrieked to the men to take him off, and started one back to bring water from a mountain rill we had passed about a verst distant, but before he returned I saw the lovely expressive eyes become glassy, and then a film came over them. It affected me to such a degree, that at the next stream we came

to I was obliged to ask them to stop, when they buried the poor fellow for me. I felt sadly grieved.

We scarcely knew how to account for his death,—whether the heat was too great for him, or whether he had got entangled in the rope; or it might have been that riding on the camel was disagreeable to him. I could not myself endure mounting these animals, the motion being the same as the pendulum of a clock, and extremely unpleasant. Not a man we had but grieved for poor Bascan; he was such a gentle, harmless creature, that he gained the affections of all.

We pitched our tent opposite to the Ala-kool, at the foot of the mountains, about an hour and a quarter's ride from the lake. A watch was ordered to be kept during the night, as we were in a bad locality, being near the place where the escaped convicts from the Chinese penal settlements have taken up their abode. As our men had no tent, and the night being stormy, I bid them place their arms in our dwelling, to keep them dry, which was done. In the middle of the night I was awoke by hearing footsteps in our apartment; somewhat startled, I gently awoke my husband and whispered to him. This was heard by the intruder, who turned out to be Columbus. He bid me not be alarmed. I demanded what he wanted; he replied, 'Our arms, there are people about.' There was no mistaking their intentions, so we jumped up. I always at night placed everything where I could lay my hands upon it at a moment's notice. Placing my husband's pistols and gun into his hands, he started, bidding me lie down and keep quiet, but such was not my nature.

If we were to be captured I was determined to see how it was managed, so put on my dressing gown and slippers, and out I went, with my single pistol in my hand; the other had been stolen. It appeared there were about six or eight men; they had come within fifty yards of our tent, but, observing the sentinels, had retreated across a little glen, and rode under the dark shade of a small mountain in front of us. Our Cossacks, Kirghis, and Mr. Atkinson, mounted their horses and rode over the ground, but they were gone; the place afforded many ways of escape, even quite near to us. What appears a vast plain, as level as the hand, when we come to ride over it we find undulating ground, intersected by gullies, where horse and rider may soon be lost to view. It was undoubtedly the intention of these men to have stolen our horses; had they succeeded in doing so, we should have been an easy prey, as without them to have ascended the deep ravine would have been impossible, and the sultry sun and burning sand across the steppe would soon have killed us, to say nothing of the want of water. After watching a couple of hours we again betook ourselves to rest, giving orders to call us if anything occurred.

On looking over the plain towards the Ala-kool, one is induced to believe the lake much smaller than formerly; there is evidence of its having once been nearer the mountains. To me there was an appearance of the whole steppe having been once under water; we found granite boulders in many parts, and it was impossible not to ask oneself the question, 'how did they come there?' and besides, they were not small. I

speak of parts far away from the lakes and mountains.

We had a heavy storm, and the wind as it passed over the lake lashed the waves into white spray, but towards evening it was fine and clear. We sat watching the shades of night draw over the scene before us. Just as the sun went down, he cast his last rays over the low, flat, sandy shores of the lake, tingeing the opposite side with a golden hue. The hills and mountains were beautifully shaded, whilst on our side all was grey shadow; it was a lovely picture, nor did we stir till every object was lost to view; even the stars were seen shining in the deep blue vault of heaven ere we rose from our seats. On such nights as these one feels as though living in a land of spirits, everything calm and serene around, not a whisper of any kind. Sometimes a feeling of sadness creeps over one, on thinking that we must once more return to the busy world, with all its ceremonies, cares, and troubles; and one would almost wish to be a Kirghis, wandering, like them, amongst all that is beautiful in nature—but then comes the thought that this would be but an idle life.

Near the lake we found a bank of gravel about twenty to twenty-five feet deep. At the bottom of this bank was a fine shingly shore; it was small and black, and had evidently been washed up from the lake. About a verst to the east, we saw a dark mass jutting out of the water; on riding up to it we found it was a piece of rock, composed of the same material as the shingle. Mr. Atkinson struck it with his hammer, when it rang like a bell; he found it very difficult to

break. A reef of it ran out into the lake, but deep under water, which was so clear that anything could be seen at a great depth. On tasting the water we found it salt and bitter.

There is an island rising up in the lake, but it was too distant to discern anything but a mass of rocks. In winter the Kirghis cross the ice to it; they told us that the pasturage there is good for one month. In summer it is impossible to reach it, as they have no boats. It is frozen over in the month of October. The snow falls very deep; bourans are very frequent, and are frightful in their effects.

It had been told Mr. Atkinson, by Baron Humboldt, that there had been volcanoes in this lake, and, as if in confirmation of his theory, we found near its shores what appeared to be lava. We brought a piece of it with us to Barnaoul, where they have analysed it, but declare it is not lava. Now I do not pretend to tell you what the composition is, nor anything about it. All I can say is, that the spot itself was a lovely one. There are two lakes, the small and the large Ala-kool. The island was in the large one.

There were many Kirghis tombs on the shore, all of sunburnt bricks, excepting one of a sultan, which was of wood.

How singular it appears, in one day, in the morning to be in tropical heat, all clothing unbearable, and before night to be in a snowy range, having to break the ice to procure water. This was our case on leaving the Ala-kool. It would be almost a repetition to tell you anything about this grand and mighty ravine that

we ascended, but, on our passage up the mountain, what a lovely view we had of the lake, stretching far over the steppe. We dismounted our horses, and by a narrow zig-zag path reached a ridge, whence it was nearly perpendicular down to the steppe. . The height was so terrific that it required a good head to look down.

Here we seated ourselves to watch the vapour rising from the lake, which gradually became condensed as it reached the colder regions; it was then carried over the mountains, where it became black, and then we heard the thunder roll, and saw the heavy rain begin to fall. All this to me was a curious sight, never having remarked it before. When first the vapour began to condense, it appeared not larger than the hand.

At the top of this pass Mr. Atkinson, to the delight of the Kirghis, shot a large black eagle. I held these birds ever in the greatest dread, being in constant fear of them flying off with Alatau. They frequently carry off lambs, but I had not the slightest desire that Alatau should visit one of their eyries, to serve as a meal for their eaglets.

Amongst the mountains near the lake we never passed one day without a thunderstorm, and sometimes two. This warring of the elements is grand, and the more so when it takes place in one of the ravines. Then the storm, combined with the roaring of the water, appears to make the very rocks tremble; and afterwards to see the clouds clear off, and the sun shoot down his bright rays, has a beautiful effect.

On the 26th July we returned to our old quarters on the lake. The morning we left it, we were up at an early hour, so as to be on our way ere the sun rose, but our hopes were frustrated. During the night the dogs had been very uneasy. We were up many times, but saw nothing; but just as we were ready to start, at sunrise, Falstaff (a Cossack so named by us) came and pointed out some men prowling about. Mr. Atkinson ordered two of the Cossacks and a Kirghis to ride towards them. He mounted his own horse to go with them, leaving me Columbus; but I entreated of him not to leave us, knowing that he was a better shot than all the three Cossacks put together. As soon as the men observed our people mounted, they rode off fast towards the head of the lake; there were four of them. Our men followed at a furious speed.

The chase was an interesting one. For full twenty versts we could see them, excepting when crossing the watercourses, then dry. These not being broad, they were only hidden for a few minutes. Both parties seemed bent on reaching the same point, which was the head of the lake; the one to reach it, and the other to cut them off. They at last became so small, from the distance, that even with the glass we could no longer distinguish them.

We now looked anxiously for the issue. Suddenly we saw four men creep up from one of the watercourses, but seeing us on the watch they descended, and shortly afterwards rode out on horseback, going towards the river Aragita, and the part where Chinese and Kirghis congregate. This might have been a ruse, to

draw all away from the yourt, whilst others were near to pounce upon us, and sweep all off; if so, they did not succeed.

After a couple of hours' more watching, we saw a something moving on the plain towards us from the head of the lake. We became quite excited, the more so as we observed one more was added to the party. At length, when they came near enough for us to distinguish, we observed they were leading a camel, whilst George was carrying a long lance in his hand. We learned from them that they had come up with the men, who had been obliged to relax in their speed, to protect a companion whilst he threw away his saddle, to lighten the burthen of the horse; this he did without dismounting. Whilst he was doing so, two men rode up to attack the Cossacks. One tried to stab George with a lance; he missed, and ere he could strike the second blow, George suddenly wheeled his horse round and caught the lance from him. As he did so the fellow's fury was great. He said, 'We have tracked you for the last fifteen days, but you shall not escape us; we will take you yet.'

After a little more battling, they rode off. Our men, reloading their pistols, followed some distance, but then concluded it was more prudent to return. As they were doing so, they found the camel picketed in one of the watercourses, and brought it with them. At the next aoul we came to, they claimed the camel; he had been stolen the night before, with others, and more than twenty of their finest horses. This tribe warned us of the bad characters we were sure to meet with in

the direction we were about to take, but we saw nothing more of them.

I have not told you of the many rapid streams we had to cross; some where we had all to ride in together, the one to bear the other up. The Kirghis, invariably placing me in the centre, and clutching my dress, seemed determined to take care of me. Some of the streams were broad and deep. When it was so, I used to retire behind the reeds or rocks, as the case might be, and, stripping, put on my bathing gown, with my belt round my waist; and tying my clothing into a bundle, boots and all, I jumped on to my horse—merely holding tight on to him with my legs, there being no saddle—and swam him across in the company of a Kirghis, he gallantly carrying my bundle for me; when I would again retire with my bundle, to re-equip myself. These are the sort of things we have to do in travelling. At first I used to feel (I will not say timid, but) my heart beat quicker; now I think nothing of it. I am vastly altered since leaving Petersburg.

Then I must tell you of the wild horses we have to mount, caught fresh from the Taboon; some, perhaps, never before mounted. Once I was really alarmed. I had Alatau on my saddle, when my horse began to shy: fortunately I soon quieted him. But, another time, I had thrown my cloak around me during a storm; it cleared off, and Columbus being near, I asked him to take it and roll it up, as my horse was rather wild. His being the same, he had a little difficulty in approaching me; thus the cloak fell from my shoulders, which being seen by my horse, he shyed fearfully. Columbus now

FORDING A STREAM AMONG THE ALATOU MOUNTAINS.

attempting to ride up, made him worse; he then started off over the plain at full speed. No efforts of mine could stop him, so, sticking to him like a leech, I waited patiently till he should either tire himself or be caught, for the Cossack was galloping after me. A Kirghis now joined in the chase, and commenced hallooing and bellowing at the utmost pitch of his voice; this made matters worse, for the animal dashed on the faster.

At last Columbus stopped. I found out this was why the man was calling, for when he was no longer heard galloping behind us, my horse gradually slackened his pace, and by degrees came to a walk. I was afraid to attempt to turn him till he became quieter, so I looked round, and saw the Kirghis at a great distance, walking his horse towards me, and Columbus standing still; he at length drew near, and by degrees reached my side, and seized the bridle. As he did so, I thought the horse would have thrown me, but he stroked him, and seemed to calm him. After this the man patted me on the back, and gave me to understand how proud he was of me; then he showed me what a Kirghis woman would have done under similar circumstances. First, he commenced screaming, and almost set my horse into another fright, and concluded by falling from his horse. He remounted, and again patted me with evident delight.

We had several miles to ride back, and I did not at all thank my animal for giving me a run for nothing. On reaching our party, I received so many congratulations at my safe return, as also for my bravery, that I verily believe, if we had stopped longer in the steppe, a woman would not have been looked upon as such a con-

temptible being as they consider her to be; for the men now began to notice me, a thing they had scarcely deigned to do before.

As we were crossing the steppe between the two lakes, and near the shores of the small one, we found the sun declining fast, and being yet far from a river, we sent a man to the small lake, and, finding the water sweet, we called a halt. Our tent was soon pitched, as far from the reeds as possible; the sand was beautifully clean and white, and solemn stillness around us; but night came on like a race-horse, and then we heard a most unwelcome sound amongst the reeds. This was our old tormentors the mosquitoes commencing their music. I quickly crept into bed, hoping they might not find us.

For long we lay watching the vivid lightning. This, with the heat from the ground, prevented our sleeping. At length we slept, but we were soon awoke by the blood-thirsty creatures, who had too surely discovered us. There were, I am sure, millions in our tent; they positively maddened me, and I became alarmed lest they should devour the boy. Mr. Atkinson arose and went outside, to see if anything could be done to keep them out, but his exit was not so rapid as his retreat into the tent; he had not gone ten paces, before the horrible things seized upon him with such energy, that he was glad to array himself in his tchimbar and boots. How I prayed that a breeze might spring up, and as if my prayer was answered, it began to blow; this increased till it became a gale, which was nigh sweeping everything away. We had to call the men to secure the tent,

which had fallen down; they propped it up so that we could just breathe, and then putting weights on the outside left us. It had one good effect, it entirely cleared us of the enemy.

The lake, which was like a mirror when we lay down, commenced breaking on the shore with a tremendous noise, while the wind whistled as if from the sea. As soon as day broke we arose, and quickly packing up started without breakfast, as the dark black clouds were gathering; but the rain caught us, and the sand, which was so hard and dry the night before, was now a quicksand, into which we kept sinking. All were alarmed, and our progress was very slow: still I could not resist going up to the lake, which was really frightful to look upon; the waves were rising to a tremendous height.

On the 9th of August we arrived at a Chinese picquet close to Choubachac, or, as they there called it, Chougachac. Falstaff tried to dissuade us from going on, as he had been told by a Tartar that the Chinese would make us prisoners; I laughed at his cowardice. When he saw we were determined upon proceeding, he pleaded indisposition, took the place of Columbus near the camels, and instead of leading dropped quite behind them as soon as ever we reached Chinese ground. As we approached the picquet, we could perceive the town and its minarets in the distance; and we intended applying to the officer for permission to enter it. It was about mid-day when we arrived, and for the first time I really saw Chinese. There was no mistaking them and their peculiar costume; their boots were principally of black

satin, with very high heels and thick soles; their jackets pleased me amazingly, and were really pretty. Those of the servants were of blue cotton, but their superiors wore silk or satin. The latter is called kanfa, and can be washed exactly like a piece of cotton.

Now commenced the ceremonies. A servant ran forward to announce our arrival, making signs for us to remain; he shortly returned, and conducted us into a courtyard, where we found the principal officer playing with a *goose*; however he rose from his stooping posture, and received us most politely. I was completely wonderstruck at his height, Mr. Atkinson appearing quite a small man in comparison; he was like a reed, and as though a blast would have blown him over. He ushered us into his room, a place devoid of furniture, there being merely a raised platform for his bed, on which he seated us. The apartment was shortly filled with persons, undoubtedly anxious to see what we were like.

The officer desired to know our object in visiting China. Mr. Atkinson said that being so near Chougachac, he merely wished to pay his respects to the governor, and see the town. The officer replied that we had better encamp, and he would send a despatch to the governor, and the answer would probably arrive that evening.

We were seated in our yourt, when our new friend with his secretary and interpreter came to take tea with us. They were evidently much interested in all they saw, examining everything most minutely, and I am not sure whether I was not the greatest curiosity. They told us that they had been stationed at this picquet for

three years, and I believe they had another year to stop, before they would be permitted to rejoin their families. They complained bitterly about being separated from their wives.

The following morning two officers with three soldiers rode up to our yourt, and the former dismounted and entered. As they had no interpreter we could not understand a word, but, to judge from their countenances, they were enchanted to see strangers. They consented to take tea, but before I had poured it out, the soldiers said something, when they both started up, and shaking us most cordially by the hand, darted out of the tent, remounted their horses, and galloped off at a furious speed. It appeared that they had come from another picquet to have a stare at us. These men were also very tall; so I came to the conclusion that they had been chosen as able to look over the reeds and along the road. The soldiers had bows and arrows slung at their backs; one of them carried a long lance, but they all sat their horses beautifully,—like the Kirghis they had the short stirrup-straps.

On going outside we discovered the cause of their hasty departure: the soldiers had seen their superior officers and their retinue on the road from Chougachac. Our first friend sent to say they were coming.

In about two hours he came himself to announce the arrival of three officers from the town, who, he said, would be very glad to see us. I put on my hat, and desired Columbus to take care of the child till our return. The Chinaman was perfectly horrified to think we intended walking, he would not hear of our going

in so undignified a manner, so we had to order the horses: but, when he found it was our intention to leave Alatau, he was terribly vexed; no! he must go, so I put his hat on and told Columbus to bring him. On arriving at the picquet we found a body of soldiers, they opened a way for us to the presence of the officers; when I took my husband's arm, and we marched along, Columbus following with the boy, and George bringing up the rear as interpreter. We found them sitting cross-legged on a carpet spread under a group of trees; quite a romantic spot, and so exquisitely cool: to the right, in the distance, was seen a tomb, and to the left a stream of water. The officers instantly rose and came to shake hands with us, which they did in a most cordial manner. This being done by each in turn, stools were placed, on which we two seated ourselves, when tea and sweetmeats were handed to us. In the meantime, Alatau had been seized by the kaldi or superior officer, who almost devoured him with kisses, then the other two had him in succession, when he was passed back to the kaldi, who sat in the centre with a low table before him, the others sitting at each side.

The conversation now commenced respecting our visit, and Mr. Atkinson repeated his request of the previous day. They put many questions, thinking there was some other motive. Then they said we were the first English who had ever presented themselves in this part of China, and that the governor could not allow us to enter the town, until he had sent to the emperor; but that if we would consent to remain, he would send a despatch to know if we might be admitted, and in the meantime

THE ENGLISH TRAVELLERS' INTERVIEW WITH CHINESE ON THE FRONTIER OF CHINA.

would do all they could to make us comfortable, and render our stay pleasant. From this proposition my husband dissented at once.

After a good deal more conversation, I asked whether I could not enter the town; there would be surely no impropriety in my doing so, and, if they would allow me, I would have no objection to go alone. The kaldi smiled, and asked what I expected to find. I answered, 'Merely the town and the people in it; and, never having visited a Chinese town, everything would be of interest besides a curiosity.' He replied: 'We have only our wives and daughters there, and the town itself is but a miserable place; but, if I dared, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take you, for you would be the greatest curiosity we ever had in the place. If our laws did not forbid it, I would this moment take you, so that my wife might see you; but my head would answer for my temerity,'—and he significantly passed his hand across his throat. It was intimated to Mr. Atkinson, that, if he dressed as a Tartar and shaved his head, he might enter as a merchant and nobody be the wiser; but to this he would not consent, as an Englishman he would visit the place or not at all

Our communications were naturally of a very limited kind, it requiring five persons to carry on the conversation, which went through four languages. George stood by the side of us; but on their side it was exceedingly interesting. The Tartar who translated into Chinese was a very handsome man. He stood on the left of the officers, and after receiving a communication from our side, turned to his superiors, and kneeling on

one knee said something; he then rose, and crossing his hands on his breast and bowing his head delivered the communication. When the kaldi answered, he again knelt down, and going through the same ceremony rose and turned to our side.

They now invited us to stay and dine, to which we consented, having nothing better to do. They made many excuses for the poverty of the dinner, but seemed pleased that we would stop. It consisted of rice, meat, and soup, which came last; this was followed by sweetmeats, and then tea. They tried to teach me to eat with chopsticks, and were quite pleased when I managed to do so. However, George had sent *home* for a *pair* of spoons and a *pair* of forks, which afforded two of our hosts much amusement. The kaldi said he had once been stationed at Canton, and had seen English there, and knew some of their customs. After tea we took our leave, intending to start on our journey back the following morning. They also would stay to see us before starting. Alatau was most fervently embraced, and as we passed down between the files of soldiers, they were no longer so stately as on our arrival, for they seized the child, and each one in his turn embraced him; there was not one let him pass, and I can assure you the boy was amused.

On arriving at our yourt and talking the matter over, we concluded it would be better to start at once, and travel on during the cool of the evening, so we sent a messenger to say such was our intention. Flour and rice were forwarded for our acceptance; they were probably aware, as travellers, that we could not get any

on our journey; and a hope was expressed that we would not leave without seeing them. All was soon prepared, when we mounted our horses and rode over to bid our friends farewell. We not having announced our approach by a messenger, found one of the gentlemen without his uniform,—he was greatly shocked; the other two were in full dress, and appeared to enjoy their colleague's mishap amazingly. I presented a purse to the kaldi; the trifle pleased him. They then shook hands with us, kissed Alatau; and thus we parted, apparently with mutual regret that the acquaintance could not be continued. They gave us a guard of honour to conduct us part of the way. The first officer, the hero of the goose, presented Alatau with an enormous cucumber, which he looked at with no small surprise, but which was most acceptable to his father, not having tasted a vegetable of any kind for nearly a year.

The day after bidding adieu to our Chinese friends we rode for ten hours over burning sand without stopping; which, together with the intense heat of the sun, rendered me almost dead with headache. The reflection affected Mr. Atkinson's eyes very much. When we encamped, I was so very ill that I became a little alarmed. How gladly would I have lain down! but it could not be. I had Alatau to wash and bathe, which I usually did whilst the tent was being got ready, and the camels unloaded; and this ended, I had the bed to make,—how I knelt down to do it, I scarcely know. After this was done I fed the boy and put him to bed. We were exceedingly systematic in all our arrange-

ments; each one had his allotted task; no one was idle; and there was no hurry or confusion. Having performed my duties, and seen my husband seated at his tea, I lay down on a bearskin, and thought never to rise again; but after a sound sleep I was all right, and ready for my breakfast a little after five, having fasted for twenty-four hours, and had a fatiguing day's ride.

We never allowed Alatau to suffer if we could avoid it; for at each tiny rivulet we came to we dismounted, and, taking off his little dress, poured the water over him with a drinking-cup. It was the affair of a few moments; we speedily joined the rest of the party, and had the satisfaction of knowing the boy was refreshed at the cost of a short gallop over the burning waste.

The flour we had from the Chinese we used to mix with milk when near a Kirghis encampment, and with water when not within their reach, and then fry it in a little fat: this we considered a great delicacy. When we got to the end of our flour, we had an amusing, but not a pleasant, incident. It was evening when the man announced the last of it; we were therefore more sparing than usual with our tea, reserving part for the morrow's meal, and this we placed in a round tin case, which held our plates, and when open served as two soup plates. In the morning, after I had made tea, I looked for my tin, but could not find it. I called a Cossack; he knew nothing of it. We were at a Kirghis aoul, so it was evident some one had paid us a visit during the night. Inquiries were instituted, the master of the aoul felt his honour was at stake. Guests to visit his aoul, and then be robbed, would never do. A

strict investigation was made; but it was of no use, all declared they were innocent of the theft. By and by one of the men had to cross a rivulet for the horses, and when on the opposite side he found the tin, but it was open and the little provision gone. It appeared a dog had carried it there; he had smelled something edible inside, and being unable to open the box had taken it down to the rivulet, where he no doubt had dragged it over the stones until he had forced it open. As you can easily imagine, I was rather savage at even the name of a dog for the whole day; still we could not help having a laugh, as we might just as well have made a good meal the preceding evening.

I dare say it will appear strange to you, but, from the hour of our entering the steppe until we left it, I never knew what it was to have a sufficiency of food; without bread or vegetables it was impossible, at least for me, to feel quite satisfied. Fancy only meat and nothing but meat, then tea without sugar or cream. I was the worst off, having two to nourish; and I can assure you the keen air of the mountains sharpened the little fellow's appetite. One good thing, he had learned to eat meat: he began before he was three months old; at first he eat morsels the size of a pin's head, but bread he did not even know the flavour of.

When in the region of apples, as I before told you, we lived a good deal on them. They were sadly missed in the steppe, where there was nothing of the kind to be had. Encamping however one day in the Tarbogatie mountains, Mr. Atkinson wished, whilst we were occupied in domestic arrangements, to proceed higher up

to sketch; so I begged of him, if he found apples, not to fail in bringing a supply, and for that purpose provided Columbus with a bag. He did not seem at all inclined to take it, saying he was confident none would be found in the region they were about to visit. Nevertheless I insisted on its being taken; I was too hungry to lose a chance of procuring apples, sour though they were.

Hours had passed, when a man touched me to draw my attention from my needle, which was in constant demand, and pointed in the direction whence we had been looking for the return of the wanderers. As they drew near I saw our three, but to my surprise, on the led horse was seated another, and the Cossack leading him. I began to think they had had a struggle, and were bringing this man prisoner, but on their coming closer I was astonished to find that it was a headless trunk, seated upon the horse. I then recollected that at that period of the year no Kirghis ever wandered so far in the mountains, indeed all had descended to the plains. My heart was sad; I fancied it might be some poor fellow who had been killed by the wolves: and still I thought, why had they not buried him on the mountain? All the men were engaged looking and wondering, when my husband rode up and all was explained. It turned out that they had wandered farther than they expected, and came upon large orchards of apples, the fruit hanging in tempting masses. The bag was quickly filled, and the Kirghis mounted it before him on the saddle; but Columbus stood bridle in hand leaning against his

horse, apparently in deep thought. My husband was gathering some flowers to bring me, when he perceived him suddenly start up and without further hesitation divest himself of his tchimbar. Tying each leg with a string, he filled them with apples, and drawing the top together fastened them astride on the led animal; and this was the headless trunk.

You will like to know, I dare say, how I managed about my washing. When near a aoul I used to get the Kirghis women where we encamped, when not too late, to do it for me; and in payment gave needles, which were much prized, ear-rings, beads, pins, and even metal buttons: all these things gave great satisfaction. They make their own soap, but I never saw it done. When the linen was washed they brought it to me to dry, as they had no time to look after it; and you may conceive the process of drying was not a long one. I then folded it, when it was beautifully mangled with the pressure it got on the road.

I must now tell you of a tea-party I had in the steppe. Mr. Atkinson wishing to sketch a group of women, I sent the Cossack to invite a number, as I could not get them to understand what I wanted. They came in grand holiday costume, and amongst them was a bride, whose dress was really pretty. The calatte was silk of gaudy colours, over this was worn a short jacket of black velvet, with crimson cloth round the edge. The head-dress consisted of a high conical cap, the upper part being white, whilst a black velvet band embroidered with gold enclosed the face. A line of silver drops and coral beads hung over the forehead,

from a broad band embroidered with coral; and over all this was thrown a white veil. We once met a bridal party, the husband was taking the object of his affections, or rather his slave, to his own aoul. The veil was thrown completely over her head, concealing her features entirely, so that her horse had to be led. Camels were following with her dowry. I wished to raise her veil; at first she made a slight resistance, but afterwards allowed me to lift it. She smiled and seemed pleased to see us, and surveyed me probably with as much curiosity as I did her. She looked very interesting, which is more than I can say of the generality of her countrywomen. To return to my tea-party. When the sketch was completed, I had the somervar brought in, and mustering all the basins and glasses we were possessed of, regaled my friends with tea. I wish you could have seen the dismay pictured on the faces of the men, to whom I was cruel enough not to offer even a glass. Tea concluded, I had meat brought in and served to my guests. This was the crowning point; the 'lords of the creation' could no longer stand this slight, so arose and made their exit, and I saw no more of them that night. The women appeared to enjoy the fun of the thing. When they had ended their meal, I completed their happiness by giving to each a few beads and ear-drops.

I must tell you of the very great disparity which occurs frequently in the ages of married couples amongst these tribes. At one aoul we saw a newly married couple, where the wife was near thirty and the husband a mere child, whom I saw her correcting in the

A TEA PARTY IN A KIRGHIS TENT.

same way a mother would correct her infant. Another couple we met at some other aoul, where the wife was a healthy robust young woman, and the husband an insignificant youth of fifteen. The cause of these marriages is, that the boys are left orphans, and their guardians marry them to women who can take care of them, and thus they relieve themselves of all trouble.

I cannot forbear mentioning the daughters of Beck Sultan, two beautiful girls: the youngest was more to my taste, being very pretty; her hair hung in a multitude of braids around her face, and just on the crown of her head she wore quite a coquettish-looking cap. She was slim, and exceedingly graceful in all her movements. Her elder sister was a perfect Amazon. When she visited us she brought her little nephew with her, a fine child between two and three years of age; she was sitting playing with him, when she placed him on her hand, and stretching her arm out at full length, there he stood. As you may imagine, I was not a little surprised, for he was really a heavy boy. At her departure, I conducted her to the door of the tent, she gave the child to the man who was holding her horse, and taking the bridle from him, placed her hand on the saddle and vaulted into it without the slightest effort. Be assured, I envied her this accomplishment. And then to see her on horseback was a beautiful sight, she sat the animal so gracefully.

We had many times in the steppe occasion to see the great mischief done by wolves, which abound in vast numbers, and make frightful ravages amongst the

sheep. In one case the savage animal had made an attack upon two boys, but was fortunately frightened off by our approach.

Our journey in the steppe being ended, we again resumed our carriage, which we found in Aiagooz. With sorrow we bade adieu to our Cossacks, who had been our companions through so much toil and so many dangers. And the child too,—they had become attached to him; many an hour had they passed in singing songs to amuse him on the way. The bidding farewell is always a sad feeling, be it to persons or be it to a spot; and this I felt when we reached a point in the steppe, where I saw for the last time the white peaks of the Alatau and Actau rearing their lofty heads far into the clear blue sky. I was loth to leave them; and when I did so, I could not restrain a tear from starting to my eyes.

On arriving at Zmeinogorsk, a little more than a year from the date of our leaving it, so much were we altered, that at first sight our friends did not really recognise us. Mr. Atkinson was in a terrible plight, his boots had been patched and mended with the bark of trees, till they would scarcely hold together. The first person in request was a bootmaker, whose ingenuity you would find a difficulty in matching. We gave the order for the boots and supplied the man with leather. He looked at Mr. Atkinson's foot, and was going away, when I stopped him, to say he must at once take the measure, as they were required immediately. 'Oh, I never measure,' he replied, and went away: we felt sure the leather would be wasted. In

two days they arrived, when my husband declared he had never had a pair of boots fit him so well.

We had several visits to make as well as evening parties to attend. At the first I went to I found the principal amusement of the evening was, as usual, card-playing. The young ladies sat, Siberian fashion, bolt upright in chairs placed close together round the room. Having examined all, I tried to enter into a conversation; but, as it is customary to be very silent, I found it a difficult task, receiving no other answer than 'yes!' and 'no!' After a time I found a very chatty body, with whom I got on capitally; but we were interrupted by the hostess enquiring if I did not play cards. I said 'No, the only thing I do is to play patience, or tell fortunes.' I had no sooner uttered the last words, than my neighbour begged that I would lay out the cards for her. I said it was merely nonsense I had repeated; but it was of no avail, cards were procured, and we adjourned to the dining-room, and for three whole hours did I sit there, obliged to invent all sorts of folly. No sooner did one set retire than another came forward; not alone the young girls, but the old ones likewise. It was only when the table was about to be spread for supper that my dealings in the black art ceased; had I been in London, and the police entered, I might have been walked off to prison.

A few weeks later I was at the same house, when an old lady bowed very low to me, and enquired after my health; I returned the compliment, although I did not know her. She then called the attention of a younger one to me, and said, 'You must thank this lady.' I

stared, as I could not imagine on what account. She explained by saying that I had brought her son, the husband of the younger lady. I was still more perplexed, until she said, 'You laid out the cards for me, and just as you foretold he arrived;' and again turning to her daughter-in-law, she said, 'Soul of mine, why do you not return thanks?' when both set to bowing like Chinese dolls. I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the old body, and, what is more, I had again to go through another ordeal of fortune-telling.

Before leaving Zmeinogorsk, I wanted some pomatum made, so forwarded my recipe to the apothecary, with a note asking for castor oil and essence of peppermint. I received four times the quantity I had asked for, and everything of the best quality, and not one kopeeck would they receive in return. I discovered that the old lady whom I met at the *soirée* was the wife of the apothecary. She had said to me, 'My husband observes you never send to him for anything.' Some one addressing me at the time, I had been unable to seek for an explanation; but here it was.

I must now tell you of a rather singular circumstance which took place whilst at Zmeinogorsk. This time we occupied the same apartments we had on our first arrival. Some few changes had taken place on account of a visit they had received from the wife of the Natchalnick of Barnaoul. I found, for instance, a bed put up in a room where no bed had been before, and we slept in it for several nights. You must understand the building we occupied was very large; it was what is called the Gospodsky Dom, which is devoted expressly to visitors,

and is capable of accommodating a considerable number. A courtyard separated us from the house of the Natchalnick, where we used to take our meals, with the exception of breakfast, which was served to us in our own rooms.

At our arrival from the steppe, we found the host and hostess absent at Petersburg. The former was daily expected; meanwhile we were entertained by the gentleman who occupied his post until his return. My husband spent the first evening with him, and I sat in my bedroom awaiting his return. The servant entered to ask if I required anything further before she went to bed; I told her I would take the child into my arms, if she would make the bed in the next room. I had a sudden fancy to change it. She did as I bade her, but was, I think, a little surprised at my caprice. Hour after hour passed, not a sound was heard in any direction, all was still as death, within and without the building, with the exception of the voice of the sentinel. I was reading, and the witching hour of night was close at hand, when I heard a peculiar sound which rather startled me. Although no coward, I own to a strange feeling passing over me. I was alone in the house; I knew not where the servants slept, or whether they slept there at all; I was completely ignorant of their movements. Hearing nothing further, just as the deep-toned bells tolled forth the hour of twelve, I again settled myself to read; still, not without taking a look at Alatau, who was calmly sleeping. I had not been long absorbed in my book, when I again heard a sound which made me start, the more so as I was sure it was

in the room; this being very large, I shaded my eyes, and tried to peer through the apartment, when there was a creaking and a cracking followed by a smash. I started to my feet, but for a moment I was unable to distinguish anything, for the room was filled with either smoke or dust. When it cleared off, I looked in the direction whence the sound proceeded, and saw that the greater part of the ceiling over the bed had fallen; had the child been there, he would have been killed to a certainty.

After the affair was over, I could not help reflecting how mysteriously we are at times directed. Of why I had had the desire to remove the bed I could give no account; it appeared to me strange. Something of a similar nature had once happened to me in Petersburg. I was in the habit after dining of retiring to my room in company with a young lady to read; but one day we did not do so, but lingered amongst our elders, gossiping and talking. All left but three, and still we sat on, when we were suddenly startled by a great crash. We rushed through the rooms and found the maids pale as death, standing near my door. None of them knew what was the matter; it was something in my room, but no one dared to enter. Going in we found the ceiling had fallen, not exactly over the sofa, but large pieces had fallen on it, which would have given anyone sitting there a serious blow, even if it had not proved fatal. So you see how the hand of Providence is stretched over us mortals. Had my friend the apothecary's wife known of this, she might have supposed, with her usual *naïveté*, that I was a witch, and had foreseen these events on the cards.

It will perhaps be interesting to know how we are going to spend our time this winter. I will tell you in a few words. Mr. Atkinson has a large room in which he intends devoting his time to painting, so that on our return you will have some idea of the country over which we have travelled; still, although the delineations of the places we have visited are faithful, I feel better pleased to have seen nature than a representation of nature. My occupations are of a more ordinary character, merely in some instances mechanical, for instance the use of the needle; but I have a real treat in books, having been deprived of this luxury so long. When I commence one, I never know how to leave it. Then there are the evening parties; and although a short distance from the town, we are never allowed to miss them, a sledge or carriage is always sent for us. Then Christmas is approaching with its festivities, when all the young officers from the distant Zavods will arrive to take part in the grand doings. I understand balls will be given at the houses of each of the three principal officers.

Dresses and head-dresses for the great occasion are anxiously looked for from Petersburg, as all things of this kind are ordered from there; thus the state of the roads causes much disquietude to the ladies, as I learned that it does happen at times that the boxes containing these articles are immersed in water, and everything ruined.

I must tell you of a circumstance which happened to us on the first night of our arrival in Barnaoul this time, and which was nigh numbering us with those

that were. It being a bitter cold day, and the rooms we occupied not very warm, they were again heated during our absence at dinner, to which we had been invited by Colonel Sokolovsky. On our return the bear-skins were spread, and in due time we lay down to rest. In the night I was disturbed by Alatau breathing very hard: I felt him, he was in a burning fever. I was about to raise myself to procure a light, when I found such a lassitude had come across me, that I had not strength to rise; at the same time the pulses in my head were throbbing fearfully, and my heart beating so wildly that I was alarmed. I awoke my husband, who at once said there was vapour in the room; he had been once before, in this same town, nearly killed by it. At last I arose to follow him to the door, but fell prostrate in the centre of the room, with the child in my arms. No sooner was the door opened, than my husband also fell in the passage; here we all lay full ten minutes, without the power of moving. The cold frosty air rushing in recovered us. We awoke the inmates; and very properly, I think, gave the man who had done this a thorough scolding. After the stove had been opened a short time, there was quite a blaze from the wood, still far from burnt out. Had the child not fortunately awakened me, I make no doubt that it would have been our last sleep. It is by no means unusual for the peasantry to be killed in this way; they are so exceedingly careless in such matters.

CHAPTER IX.

Preparations to leave Barnaoul—A Bal Costumé—Siberian Courtship and Marriage—Whipping a Bride a Proof of Affection—The Cook and the Cauliflowers.

Barnaoul, May 1850.

I THINK I have great reason to retort, and complain of the non-arrival of letters from you. I do hope I may get one before we leave this town. Your next must be addressed to Irkoutsk, but months will pass ere we reach it, and during all that time I believe you will have a little peace, as I shall be deprived of the power of scribbling to you. I am not sorry that we are once more going to wander amongst the mountains. With the return of spring I feel, like the birds, a desire to take wing and fly away; not but I shall feel very sorry to quit this place, where we have spent some most agreeable months. The longer I dwell here the more I like the inhabitants. During the winter we have been entertained with balls, marriages, private theatricals, and indeed no end of amusements.

You will doubtless be surprised to hear that my son has made his *début* in the great world. He has been to a *bal costumé* dressed *à la Kirghis*; and a beautiful costume it was, the most inexpensive, but decidedly the most effective, in the room. Some of the children

wore most costly dresses. When it was proposed to me to take Alatau, I thought the idea preposterous; but on the eve of the ball I began to regret that I had not accepted the offer of one of the ladies to go with me to purchase a material for a dress for the child. Mentioning the circumstance to his father, he said, 'Why not make him a Kirghis costume?' I thought the idea brilliant, so having arranged how it was to be done, I was up early on the day of the ball stitching away; perhaps you will like to know how he was dressed.

First he had a red silk (Chinese) tchimbar, then a beautiful little dressing-gown, of Bokharian material, striped red and yellow, the ends tucked into the tchimbar; and instead of a shawl round the waist, he wore a dark blue scarf with embroidered ends; a whip, a hunting-knife, and a match-box were stuck into the belt; red shoes, and a Kirghis hat, in shape like a boat, completed his costume. The hat was the most difficult job of all, but it succeeded admirably. It was quite scientifically cut out in pasteboard by my husband; I covered it with red Chinese silk, and decorated it with gold lace, coral beads, and Chinese ornaments, the feathers from the breast of a turkey supplying the place of the owl's. At six o' clock the carriage arrived. When he was dressed and saw himself in the glass, it was very amusing. I had difficulty in getting him away; however, I divested him of his hat, and wrapping him in my fur cloak, he slept till our arrival. The musicians were seated in the ante-room, and were just commencing a dance; this aroused the little fellow, I tied on the hat, and whispered to him to walk into the room,

where the children were making a terrible uproar. He marched boldly to the door, where he stood apparently amazed at all he saw, we keeping behind. No sooner had he made his appearance, than a sudden silence ensued for a moment, then came a scream from all sides, 'It is Alatau! it is Alatau!' When we entered no one saw or took any notice of us; there was a crowd round the child, who had been seized by Madame Sokolovsky, and placed in the centre of a table where the gentlemen were playing cards.

Afterwards one of the children said to me: 'At first I did not recognise Alatau, I thought he was a walking doll, and had been made to come into the room as a surprise to us.' It may truly be said of Alatau that he has already caused a sensation. We stayed till near ten, and had then a difficulty in getting him away.

You will like to hear something of a Siberian marriage. The courtships are not long,—a month is sometimes the extent of the acquaintanceship. This in some degree may be caused by the vast number of presents the bridegroom is expected to make; he never approaching the house empty-handed. One of his gifts must of necessity be a shawl, the value depending on his means. I once heard of a gentleman sending a courier express to England for one for his future bride. No sooner has a gentleman made his proposal to the parents of the young lady, and become her accepted suitor, than he is introduced to the whole of the relations of the family, servants as well; he is then looked upon in the light of one of its members, and is henceforth permitted to make his calls without being in full uniform.

On the eve of the wedding the young lady assembles her companions, when they all join in singing a farewell to the maiden. The bridegroom sends them vast quantities of bon-bons, and sometimes he sends a present to each of the young ladies; the bride also divides amongst them little trinkets which she has worn. Meanwhile the bridegroom gives a dinner to his bachelor friends, and takes his leave of them.

The dowry, for a day or so before the ceremony, is spread out for the inspection of friends who call to see it. The room in which it is displayed looks like a magazine. The dresses are suspended on stands, and tables covered with jewellery, laces, and linen tied with pink and blue ribbon, &c. &c. Before it is packed to take to the bride's own home, the priest comes to bless the articles, and sprinkle all with holy water. He is usually admonished to be careful of velvet dresses, &c.; this he appears to understand, and if sufficiently rewarded is most sparing of the consecrated water. I was told when such was not the case, he would spitefully throw a large quantity over the perishable articles. The bridegroom furnishes the house; but the bride provides the silver and linen, as likewise a dozen shirts, a dressing-gown, and a pair of slippers for her future husband. I presume it is to be supposed that she with her own hands spins the flax, and then weaves it into cloth.

On the marriage day it is not permitted for the bride and bridegroom to meet till they do so at the church, the ceremony usually taking place about 8 P. M. The young couple are also obliged to fast from the time of rising on the eventful day, until after their return from

church, with the exception of a cup of tea without cream. As soon as the bridegroom and his party have entered the sacred edifice, the bridesman drives off to announce the fact to the bride.

The dress of the bride is usually very beautiful; it is full ball costume, and always pure white, with veil and orange blossoms. She is not allowed to do the slightest thing for herself; all the relations, and even the merest acquaintance, provided they are unmarried, are invited to assist in the dressing of the bride. The shoes, which are of white satin, are put on by the youngest brother, or if there is no brother, by the nearest relation, who places a piece of money in one of them; this is the perquisite of the *femme de chambre.*

On one side of the church are the relations and friends of the bridegroom, and on the opposite those of the bride; when the ceremony is concluded all return to the home of the bride's parents, and are met by music. Then the father and mother come forward,—not the real parents, but a couple chosen for the occasion, called *Mère assise* and *Père assis.* The young couple kneel to them, and receive their benediction, being crossed three times each with the image of the Virgin and Child, which afterwards is pressed to their lips; and then the crossing is repeated with the bread, in the centre of which is a silver salt-cellar containing salt. This is repeated by both father and mother to each of the newly married. After this is over, they both rise, and, kissing the hands of those who have blessed them, are conducted into an inner apartment, and seated on a sofa, where they receive the congratulations of the guests;

their health being drunk in champagne, which is often declared to be excessively bitter, and is rendered sweet by the bride and bridegroom embracing each other.

After drinking tea, the guests retire, and the young couple, if they have another home to go to, do the same, preceded by some of the married relations of the bride; whose duty it is to divest her of her bridal dress and in its stead clothe her in a muslin capote lined with silk, and a dainty little cap to correspond. Thus equipped they sit taking tea, and chatting, far into the small hours of the night; the poor husband doing solitary duty by marching to and fro in another apartment, waiting patiently till the ladies choose to separate.

The following morning the parents and near relations go to take coffee with the newly married; then there is a dinner-party at the house of the parents; this is followed by a succession of invitations, the last of which is usually hailed with delight, as it leaves the young couple at liberty to retire to the country, which they doubly enjoy, as it gives them a respite from visiting and visitors.

Whilst on the subject of marriages, I may as well tell you of that of a peasant girl which I once saw in the country. On the eve of the eventful day it is customary amongst this class for the bride to be taken to the bath by her young companions. In this case she had to pass by the garden of the house where I was stopping; and, being occupied reading, I was startled by most heart-rending sobs. I hastened to the gate to see what it was, and found the bride being supported by her young friends towards the bath. They were attempting to cheer her

by singing. I felt very sorry for the poor girl, as I had heard they often marry without having the slightest affection for their future husbands; indeed, amongst the peasants, a man chooses his partner, not from any beauty or personal attractions she may possess, but for her capabilities of endurance,—one who can do a good day's work carries off the palm in a village. The young wife is obliged to work for his relatives who are incapable of doing so for themselves. Thus this poor girl's sobs drew tears from my eyes; returning from the bath she was still sobbing, and quite bowed down with grief. I was glad when she was out of hearing, she made me feel so very melancholy.

I was invited by a young friend to accompany her to the bride's cottage. I felt some reluctance at doing so, but to please her I went. We entered quite unceremoniously, and found the young damsel seated at table supping off bread and onions; her face radiant with joy. I was startled, the more so when she enquired if she had *done* it well. I then learned that the weeping was part of the ceremony. I really felt sorry that the whole thing was a farce. After the marriage vows have been pronounced, the lady is veiled and taken to the house of her husband, where all the guests are assembled, and who express a great desire to see the face of the bride; at length the veil is withdrawn, when all exclaim 'How lovely!' In this instance I was exceedingly amused, as she, though a really good girl, was very ugly.

One of the customs among the peasantry is to hang a whip at the head of the bed. I never understood what this signified till my arrival here in Barnaoul, although

I had seen it at every peasant's cottage on the road. A nursemaid of mine left me to be married, and some short time after she went to the Natchalnick of the place to make a complaint against her husband. He enquired into the matter, when she coolly told him her husband did not love her. He asked how she knew he did not love her; 'because,' she replied, 'he never whipped her,' the instrument of castigation hung over the bed, and had never once been used since their marriage. There is no accounting for taste; what one considers a proof of love, another looks upon as a want of affection.

Among the amusements of Barnaoul is music, which they are very partial to. The arrival of an artist is always hailed with pleasure, as it gives variety to the ordinary routine of their lives. During our stay two Italians gave concerts, as also Christiana, who plays on the violoncello. At these concerts the artists are aided by the ladies, at least by those who do not object to play in public and before a large assembly. I have not yet told you of the delicious liqueur the Siberians manufacture; in Barnaoul they are famed for it, — it is made from every berry that grows. It is called Nalifka, and to my taste is preferable to wine. During the great fast, cream is not taken in the tea, almond milk or a slice of lemon is used instead, and the latter is often taken from choice; but in Siberia lemons are not to be bought, those which find their way there come as presents. As a substitute the juice of fruit is prepared, which is mixed with the tea, making a most refreshing drink.

A short time since we were invited to dine at a friend's expressly to partake of some cauliflowers which had been

sent him as a present—the first ever grown in Barnaoul. The cook, never having seen such a vegetable, had received instructions how to dress them, and managed them to perfection; but unfortunately before sending them to table (they are always given as a separate course), he placed them upon the ice. The disappointment to our host may well be imagined when I tell you he is a man who likes good living, and had looked forward to his dinner on this day with more than his usual satisfaction. He was so very angry that he could not forbear leaving the table on a visit to the cook, who received a good lecturing, and a threat for the future if he ever sent even a cold plate to table again. This was so far useful that the remainder of the dinner was served up very hot, but, alas! poor cook, he was doomed to get into disgrace,—for the ices he sent plates nearly red hot!

CHAPTER X.

The Silver Mines of Solaier—Tomsk—Krasnoiarsk—Travelling Paraclodnoi, a Mode of Transit to be avoided—Arrival at Atchinsk—Kindness of the Police-master—Visits to Exiles—Mr. Fahlenberg and his History—The Cossack's Return to his Home—The Abakan River—Enormous Snake—Return to Minousinsk—A Plague of Flies—Voyage on the Yenissey—Beauties of the River, Scenery.

Irkoutsk, September 3rd, 1850.

AFTER taking leave of our really kind friends of Barnaoul, we started for the silver mines of Solaier, a very pretty place; here we passed a couple of days with the Frazes, some friends we had made in Barnaoul. The child and myself were loaded with presents. Thence we started for Tomsk, where we spent three days, there were so many friends to visit. Had we accepted the whole of the invitations, we should have had to stay a month. After leaving Tomsk in June, all was new to us. We had a frightful journey over roads fearfully cut up: for one whole month there had been rain, with scarcely any cessation. On reaching Krasnoiarsk we fortunately found there the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. It is at all times agreeable to meet old friends, but in this instance it was doubly so: we were in a town where we knew no one, and the only acquaintance we made was the governor. We stopped a week, and, dining with them daily, we soon became acquainted. The

General told us he should leave Irkoutsk in the beginning of September, and urged us to arrive before that time. From this town we were going on to the Yenissey.

I cannot tell you much about Krasnoiarsk. It is a very clean town, and the little I saw of it pleased me; but I do not say I should like to live there.

We left our equipage and the principal part of our baggage in this town, and returned to Atchinsk, travelling what is called *paraclodnoi*; that is, by a post-carriage which is changed at each station; it is a kind of wagon without springs, peculiar to the country. The distance was near two hundred versts. I had often travelled thus previously, but never over such roads. It was impossible to sit, stand, or lie; and what made it worse for me was that I held the child in my arms, so that when the shock came he might not feel it. It was dreadful, not an instant of rest the whole way. How my poor neck ached! indeed, I ached in every part of me, but more particularly the neck. It is bad enough travelling in a carriage with springs over such a road, how gladly I would have ridden the distance!

On reaching Atchinsk, we sent our Cossack with our compliments to the police-master, stating our difficulties, and the reason we had left our carriage, and begging, if it were only possible for him, to lend us a light carriage to carry us to Minousinsk, whence we would return it to him. He was exceedingly polite, and immediately paid us a visit; he said he had not one of his own, but would borrow one from a friend. After what I have told you of the road you may imagine how I thanked him, I felt so very grateful. He was likewise

amiable enough to offer us his house, and he would find lodgings elsewhere: we thanked him, but said we must start the moment we received the carriage.

From Atchinsk, where the road was very bad and the jolts severe, I invariably offered up a prayer for the young police-master: bad as it was, what would it have been had he not kindly procured us the equipage!

We visited several mines on our way to Minousinsk, which is more like a village than a town. We drove to the house of the police-master, who courteously invited us to be his guests. We found him a most gentlemanly man: he had been exiled for some political offence, and afterwards pardoned, but not allowed to return to Petersburg. He was married to a very kind good-natured woman: but what a contrast between husband and wife! he was a clever man, with a vast amount of information, whereas she could not even read. They had no children of their own, but had adopted two: one of these he had been left the guardian of, and the other they had found lying in a forest amongst some underwood some short time after their marriage, as they were taking their customary walk. When we saw the young lady she was about seventeen years of age; and they were both well educated, having been taught by exiles of 1825 living at this time in Minousinsk. There were three of them, one quite an old man, and it was painful to witness the desire they had to return to Petersburg: two of them were brothers. They appeared weary of existence; and they had no other means of subsistence than what little money their friends annually sent to them; though the doing so had been strictly prohibited.

Another exile whom we found living at a village a short distance from Minousinsk had at one time resided in the town, where to gain a livelihood he commenced a school, and was doing remarkably well, but when it became known to the authorities, they forbade his doing so any longer. Being by this means left without any resources, and an old man, he was forced to retire to the country; when he took up his abode in the village where we found him, and where he was occupied in cultivating tobacco for his support.

On arriving at the village we enquired for his dwelling, which was shown to us by a peasant; and, there being no one to announce us, we entered, as we should have done into the abode of any villager. He was sitting by the window, reading; and observing we were strangers, he exhibited a little surprise, but arose, and raising his cap bade us welcome. There was no mistaking the noble gentleman, in spite of his costume and all that encompassed him. Having presented to him letters from his friends in Minousinsk, he read them; meanwhile bidding us be seated, he then shook us warmly by the hand, and appeared as pleased as if he had met with old friends.

I do not know anything more painful than to find a talented man with a highly cultivated mind placed in such a position as that in which we found Mr. Fahlenberg. He owned to the justice of his banishment, but deprecated in no measured terms the severity with which he had been treated. 'I wished for nothing more,' he exclaimed, 'than to gain an honest livelihood, whereas they have forced me to do this,' and with bitterness he

opened his window, and showed the field of tobacco he was cultivating. 'This,' said he, 'is the noble work on which I am obliged to employ the few remaining years of my existence; surely the punishment we have already undergone is more than adequate to the crime we committed. Even my wife,' he continued, 'was persuaded by her friends that I was dead, so remarried; but she would never have done so had she believed I still existed; of necessity I had no means of acquainting her to the contrary.' He went on to say, that a few years before he had been advised to marry, seeing he was getting old, and for the latter years of his life it would require some one to take care of him; thus he had wedded the daughter of a Cossack, a very good and really a superior woman. They had two children, a girl and a boy! the latter about seven years of age, a thorough little peasant, as rough and wild as any one of them; the girl was a beautiful fairy-like little creature, about eight or nine years of age, on whom the exile expended much of his time. She spoke French as well as if she had been brought up in a town; and her parents hoped to gain permission to send her to Irkoutsk to continue her education; but I doubt of its being so good as that which her father was giving her.

Mr. Fahlenberg told us his great enjoyment was when his old friends and companions in exile came to visit him, which they did from time to time; then they would stay a few days with him, but at the end of these few days, he added, 'they must leave me, and I am once more left to my solitude, which for awhile is almost unbearable.'

We now started for the Yenis-sey, Abakan, and Tashtyp. The first-named river we ascended as far as possible on horseback. Here was pretty scenery, and we took up our abode in most lovely spots. One night we had a small cart for our bedroom; we found it near a mill: our dining-room was more spacious; and from it we easily stepped into our drawingroom, carpeted with fresh flowers, and with a blue canopy for the roof. From here we saw the Taskill mountains, bedecked with a crest of snow, reminding us once more of our dear old friends in the Alatau. Tashtyp was our next point, the birthplace of our Cossack, which for years he had not visited. Every step of the road brought some pleasing recollections to his mind, and the nearer home he drew the more loquacious he became. He was most anxious to see his adopted father and mother. 'Such good old creatures,' he said; 'and, as I have not heard from them for more than a year, perhaps they may be dead:' and then his eyes filled with tears. 'Though I am not,' he continued, 'their real son, I love them equally the same. I have never known other parents; I was a foundling.'

The old couple came to see us, and begged of me to intercede with the Governor for liberty for him to return to the home of his childhood, at least till he had closed their eyes. We left Tashtyp for the Abakan in a boat, the old couple walking along the shore as far as it was possible to go. They then bade us adieu, and, taking an affectionate leave of their son, blessed all; and, commending us to the care of the Giver of all good, knelt down as we pushed into the stream, and remained kneeling till a bend in the river hid us from their view. I was

sorry for the Cossack, as he turned to me with tears in his eyes, and said, 'I am glad I have seen them, and the more so as it was unexpected, but perhaps I may never see the old folks again.' The Russians, especially the lower classes, have an extraordinary love for children, and even when they are not their own they still show love and regard for them.

In parts the Abakan river reminded me greatly of the Altin-Kool; it had the same lovely scenery, and at night we always encamped on its shores. One night the men prepared us a balagan on a stony spot, with a little stream at its back running into the river, and the rocks rising high above us; here we slept most delightfully. I know nothing more agreeable than the falling asleep where not a sound is heard save the rippling of the stream close by, or the rustling of the leaves in the branches above us. At daybreak we awoke, and observing by the look of the sky that we were going to have a fine day, we hastened to rise. My husband, took his coat from off the child, over whom, the night being chilly, he had thrown it to keep him warm, when I was horrified, for underneath it was coiled up at Alatau's feet, on the quilt, an enormous snake. He bade me lie still, and, beckoning to the Cossack, pointed to the venomous brute. The Cossack cut a stick with two prongs, and creeping round to the back of the balagan, tossed the reptile out, when he was quickly despatched by our men, who were standing watching for the gentleman. While they killed it with their whips they did swear at it. How fortunate it had not crept into the bed! After this intrusion I always looked with suspicion at a rocky locality; indeed,

I may say a shudder came across me each time I made my bed. I thanked God most fervently that my little fellow had escaped the venomous bite. At Zmeinogorsk and round about there, snakes are very numerous, but quite harmless.

On Friday the 21st of July, we were once more installed under the hospitable roof of our kind friend, the police-master of Minousinsk. The weather was fearfully hot, so that the rooms felt oppressive, and the more so, as inside the dwelling all was dark, and I presumed closed on account of the heat. Shortly after our arrival a servant announced lunch; we entered the dining-room, into which a little light had been admitted. I saw a table, but only dimly; I could not possibly comprehend it, it was one black mass. I stared, and on approaching a little nearer, we evidently disturbed the party assembled, not round, but on the table: every particle was densely covered with flies. Not a pin's head of the cloth was to be seen, viands and everything were of one shade. The host seemed to make light of the matter, saying it was always so in summer, not a house was free; and, did they not keep their doors and windows closed, they would be unable to exist.

In Minousinsk we purchased a large boat, and, after some necessary alterations, started in it on the 23rd for Krasnoiarsk. The whole of our acquaintances accompanied us to the boat, and, taking a most affectionate leave, wished us prosperity in our voyage on the Yenis-sey. Each had a message to one or other of his friends in exile. One of the banished brothers, in bidding me farewell, said, 'Allow me to do so as a

brother to a sister, for my mother was an Englishwoman;' and tears stood in his eyes. Poor Fahlenberg, also, when we bade him adieu for ever, said to us: 'Whilst you have been with me I seemed for awhile to forget my position and my sorrows, and talked on as though I was back in the world again. Your visit has done me no good. It appears ungrateful to say so; but a few days will bring me back to my ordinary state of mind, and I shall try to forget that you have been here.' These poor men are more to be pitied than those we meet with in Irkoutsk, who are living in comparative luxury; but more of these in another letter.

Our voyage on the Yenis-sey was delightful. Calmly seated in our boat, and at times drowsily lounging on the benches, we contemplated the pretty scenery which surrounded us; sometimes stopping for Mr. Atkinson to sketch some lovely view, and at night bivouacking in the woods or at a village, many of which enliven the banks of the Yenis-sey. What a variety in our travels! Last summer day by day we were on horseback for a hundred and twenty-three days in succession; and this summer how little in comparison have we mounted our steeds, and what a contrast between the animals when we do! Then we went bounding along on horses as wild and as beautiful as the scenery; but these are drowsy, they appear to give no spring to the spirits, and still it is impossible not to feel pleased.

The Kirghis, their steppes and mountains, are so indelibly engraved on my heart, that fifty years hence, should I live, every scene will be as vivid as at this moment; it will ever be a source of pleasure to look

back on the happy days spent amongst them, and their wild but beautiful scenery.

Shortly after our arrival at one village where we stopped for the night, the principal man of the place entered; at first he stood bolt upright at the door, like a soldier, but, finding he was courteously received by Mr. Atkinson, he seemed pleased, and bade us welcome to the village. The road papers were handed to him, which he took with a very low bow; and, having perused them, he enquired if we were Russians, evidently not comprehending what was meant by 'British subjects.' To his question we simply replied 'No!' He waited some short time, and then, bowing very low, asked with a smile if we were Germans. Again we merely answered 'No!' The poor fellow drew a long breath, apparently at his wits' end. He waited about ten minutes, gazing first at one and then at the other, and withal a little mystified. At length he cleared his throat, scratched his head, and smiling very sweetly, once more bowed to the ground, and inquired if we were Groogians (meaning Georgians). Again we replied in the negative: when I wish you could have seen the face of the poor man, his hair appeared positively to stand on end; he looked at us quite aghast, and wildly exclaimed, 'Is it possible that you are Chinese?' and, throwing down the papers, rushed headlong out of the room, whither no persuasions could induce him to return. We left early the following morning, but saw nothing more of him. All the inhabitants of the little village kept a respectful distance; ordinarily they crowded round us to have a sight of the wild animals. I presume the poor

official had mentioned, as he supposed, every nation which dwelt on the face of the earth.

On July 30th, we paid a passing visit to Krasnoiarsk, where we were most cordially received by Mr. and Madame Padalka, with whom we dined; and we then reembarked on board our little craft on our way to the gold priesks, where we met an old acquaintance of Mr. Atkinson's from the Oural. The reception was charming, this gentleman never expecting to see my husband more. The recognition was really boisterous.

All this, as you may judge, procured me a hearty welcome. Here also we met with Mr. Vassielevsky, the Gornoi Ispravonick, who gave us a most pressing invitation to his place on the Peskino, which we visited afterwards.

We learned that in this district the workmen employed in digging and washing the gold were all convicts, to the number of 9,000; with but eighty Cossacks as a guard, which is considered, and really is, a sufficient number. They are all well-conducted men, and kept in good order; and, besides, they are well fed. They have bread in unlimited quantity, quass (a fermented drink made from rye meal), farinaceous food, salt, and an allowance of one pound of meat daily. On certain fête days, vodky is served out to them. The director is then present to see fair play. The Cossack whose duty it is to pour it out has a list of the men's names, which he calls over, when each man steps forward in his turn, and drinks to the health of the director. Some of them, whether they were teetotallers or only economists I could not find

out, brought vessels into which they poured the spirit, for the purpose of afterwards selling it to their companions. I observed several pour their respective allowances into one vessel, making common stock.

Whilst here, to our sorrow, we had a great deal of rain, but to our friends it was a cause of rejoicing; their great drawback being an insufficient supply of water with which to wash the precious metal; indeed the work is often stopped by the droughts of summer.

In this district was the priesk of our friend Mr. Astershoff of Tomsk; also that of Mr. Rizanoff of Ekaterinburg, both wealthy men. What rendered our little expedition here most agreeable was the presence of two or three ladies who had accompanied their husbands for the summer. Still it sometimes prevented me seeing all I should otherwise have seen, as without them I might have wandered about everywhere, and now I was obliged to associate with my sex, not that I was sorry to do so, but it debarred me from seeking novelty.

We had to pass some dangerous rapids on the Yenissey, and found great difficulty in procuring men to accompany us. At length we started from the station next to the rapids, and our old steersman called out to his two comrades to join him in a prayer. They instantly dropped their oars, and stood up in the boat, when the old man put up a petition for our safety over the coming dangers; we too joined our silent supplications to theirs, and hoped to pass the spot without accident. The men then applied their oars, and quickly took us into the middle of this mighty stream, which was at this part gliding on smooth and tranquil.

About eight versts ere we reached the dreaded spot we could hear the roaring of the water; and, as we drew near, we could see the boiling flood. The scene was truly grand. We were carried like a shot, on a line with the first rocks. Our little boat was tossed like a feather, and hurried forward at a fearful speed. We soon reached a place awful to behold; the water recoiled from some sunken rocks, and was tossed up in waves which looked as though they would swallow our little craft. I am sure there was not a heart but quailed at the sight. A few seconds carried us over this into the boiling current, and on we swept. No sooner was the danger passed, than the men once more relinquished their oars, and, removing their caps, offered up a thanksgiving for our safety. This is a spot we shall often remember.

Our boat carried us to Matigno. Thence we went paraclodnoi to the priesks. On our way we passed versts upon versts of forest, where was seen nothing more than the blackened and charred stumps of trees, which lay scattered in all directions, some still smouldering. About ten days previous we had noticed a thickness in the atmosphere, which we at first took to be fog, but the nearer we drew towards Krasnoiarsk the more visible it became. There we enquired what it was, but no one knew, and all appeared perfectly indifferent regarding it. It had been burning about a fortnight, and was only extinguished by a heavy fall of rain. A fortnight earlier we should have been unable to reach the priesks, where all had really become alarmed. It is no uncommon circumstance for the

woods to take fire; every place is so dry and parched that the least spark will set them burning, and the Cossacks and hunters are exceedingly careless. When they make a fire in the forest, they probably do not quite extinguish it, and then a wind rises and wafts the burning ashes, and does all the mischief. There was another source of regret attending this fire, it had driven away all the birds, thus spoiling the sport.

Matigno lies on the Toungooz, which was very difficult to reach, as the men had to pull against the stream. When we arrived at the junction of the Toungooz with the Yenis-sey, it was curious to see the two rivers as though almost they were struggling for the mastery, rolling their waters along side by side for some distance, not deigning to mingle; and it was not to be wondered at, that the clear crystal stream of the former should disdain to be joined to the latter.

I must now give you some account of my little fellow. In the first place I have a difficulty in writing, for he is up on my chair and pulling my pen out of my hand, probably thinking I have written enough, and wants me to play with him. He is nearly two years of age, and just as early as he was in walking so late is he in talking; he walked without being taught. The first days we spent in a house, I was too busy unpacking to pay any attention to him. He was left to crawl about alone, as I had not yet hired a nurse, when he surprised me by getting on to his feet and marching along; he fell down, but was up again in a moment without a whimper. What made me so proud of his walking was, that he had no opportunity of learning, whereas with

other children who walk at nine months and a half, much pains have been taken. His talking was really extraordinary, for he uttered not a sentence till he began talking right off. At one time we feared he would be dumb. I presume the reason of his not talking earlier was caused by the confusion of two languages; naturally we spoke to him in English, at least his father did always, whereas strangers spoke in Russian.

The little man grows tall, and his hardy conduct makes him the admiration of all who see him. He was heard of in Irkoutsk long before he arrived, as General Mouravioff had told the Princess Volkonsky about him, and said he should like to steal him. I can tell you I am mightily puffed up at all the praise he receives. He was ill once this summer for five days, whilst at the priesks; it was probably a cold, for he is so passionately fond of bathing, that we had a difficulty in keeping him out of the water when on the Yenis-sey. Once he stayed in the water three quarters of an hour, when the weather was not very warm, this he does as the boat moves on; it was too much for him. The doctor at the priesks advised us to make him a decoction from herbs which he brought me; and tried hard to persuade me to give the child medicine, but I declined. Mme. Vassielevsky was also very attentive to the little fellow. Now, thank God, he is quite well, and as wild as a young colt; never quiet but when he has a book, then he sits and talks for hours to the pictures. Toys he has none, nor did he ever have any.

On our first arrival at Matigno, we went to the residence of Rizanoff, but on our return we went to that of

Astershoff, where we found a most gentlemanly man in the director; and, though perfect strangers, he received and treated us with all the kindness imaginable. Alatau so won on the affections of himself and his wife during the two days we stopped with them, that, having no children of their own, they wished to adopt him, said he should inherit all they had (and they were rich), and endeavoured to show how much happier the child would be, settled quietly down, than leading such a roaming life as we are doing; but, as you may suppose, it was of no avail.

The first night I bathed him and took him to bed, when the director asked to be allowed to sit beside him till he fell asleep. I heard him bid Alatau when he awoke next day not to disturb me, but to take his clothing and slip out of the room; he obeyed to the letter, for, on opening my eyes in the morning, I found he had disappeared, garments and all. On going out I found the director had himself bathed and dressed the child, who was comfortably seated on his knees, perfectly happy, and as though they were old friends. And the night following, on going into the room, I found the child asleep with his hand lying in that of this great man. I positively had difficulty in drawing him from the room.

When we parted from these good people, they conducted us part of the way, and I verily believe it was to have the pleasure of carrying Alatau; they would not permit me to touch him, or to do the least thing for him, and when we bade adieu tears stood in the eyes of the director. All kinds of good things had been prepared for the boy to eat on the road.

We found our carriage waiting for us at Kansk, whither it had been forwarded; we reached that place in one which had been kindly lent to us by M. Vassielevsky; we then started direct for Irkoutsk, where we now are, and I think it likely we shall go no farther this year, but leave till next summer our visit to the Trans-Baïkal, and then I certainly expect we shall return to Petersburg by the winter roads.

Irkoutsk is not at all an ugly town, on the contrary it is rather pretty, though as yet I have seen but little of it. I will shortly try and give you some idea of it, as well as of the inhabitants. I have not mentioned that I had a most beautiful little malachite paper-weight presented to me, with native gold on the top. M. Vassielevsky gave it to me, and it is impossible for me to retain it in my possession without an order to do so, which I am obliged to be very careful of; for, were I to lose it, there would be a chance of my remaining in Siberia for ever, as I should be sent to the mines for defrauding the government. Much as I like Siberia, it would lose some of its charms were my stay compulsory — from choice I should not object.

I fully expected to find a letter from you lying at the post-office, whither my husband went immediately on our arrival. I cannot tell you how ill I bore the disappointment.

CHAPTER XI.

Society in Irkoutsk—The Volkonskoi Family—Artists in Exile—The Princess and the sleepy Englishman—A Russian's Opinion of the English Aristocracy—Saintly Pugilism—The Domavoi, or House Spirit—Earthquake.

Irkoutsk, January 1851.

I HAVE had to go through the usual round of visits necessary for strangers to make on their first arrival. From the Princess Troubitskoy, whose acquaintance we made at the Governor-General's, I got a list of the persons to whom it is considered indispensable for us to introduce ourselves, Madame Mouravioff having kindly invited her to meet us. To the Princess Volkonskoi we had letters. These ladies, with four or five exceptions, are the persons with whom we visit most. Unfortunately within the last month death has occurred in three of the best families here, which has naturally thrown a gloom over this circle of society; then also the absence of the Governor-General makes a great difference, as all are very gay when he is here. Now, with the exception of a few dinner-parties, there are no amusements whatever going on in the town. This, as you are aware, suits me far better than all the gaieties they could offer; and we have social intercourse, which is very enjoyable.

I dare say you would like to know how we are lodged.

We have four very nice rooms, in the house of a merchant's widow, to which there is a separate entrance, rendering them very agreeable; we have also a kitchen to ourselves, and what I find comfortable is that it is separated from the dwelling-house, being on the opposite side of the court-yard. The house itself is pleasantly situated on the banks of the Angara, which is now a mass of ice; having been frozen over on the 10th of December, and on the 11th being strong enough to bear. To the astonishment of everyone here, Alatau has been bathed constantly in this river; the water is so cold that no one ever dreams of bathing in it; our little man enjoys his plunge amazingly. Every river we have passed since his birth he has been bathed in.

In this town we find many exiles; indeed they are fairly established here, some of them possessing very handsome houses. Those with whom we visit most are the Troubitskoy and Volkonskoi; in whose houses we generally meet their companions in misfortune. Although these men are not blameless, it is impossible not to feel a deep interest in them; they are some of Russia's cleverest men grown old in exile.

The first house we visited was that of Volkonskoi, and we found there a most agreeable family; the daughter is on the point of marriage with the private secretary of the Governor-General. The princess is a clever woman, and many an agreeable evening have we passed with her. She has lived to regret her voluntary banishment; which must be keenly felt by one who is fond of society, the great world, and all its pleasures. She had been but a short time married ere her husband was banished.

Speaking of our journey, the prince remarked, with a smile, that the result of travelling was at times very peculiar; 'for an example' said he, 'take myself. I was an impetuous youth, I went to Germany, France, and England, I then returned to my own country, where I unfortunately found that the effect of those travels was to lead to Siberia and the mines.' The prince is a great favourite with us, his manners are so simple and unostentatious. Any morning at an early hour, if chance led you to the market, where he is well known to every peasant, there you would find him purchasing the day's provisions for the family; and after he had passed up and down, and haggled here and there, and gathered all the news from his different friends, for he has many among the peasantry, you might see him wending his way home with geese or turkeys, or something or other, under his arm, and wearing an old cap and coat which would be almost rejected by the poorest peasant, but with a mien dignified and noble, and a countenance that it would do your heart good to see. He has land on which he grows different crops, which, it is said in Irkoutsk, his wife purchases from him. The house in which she dwells with her children is large and commodious, but the prince occupies an apartment in a small building in the court-yard.

As a characteristic of the man, I must describe to you a visit he paid to see an exhibition of horsemanship. He delights in novelty as much as any one, but he is never to be seen among the gentry of the place: he pays like the peasantry, and takes his position beside them. I asked him why he did so; with a smile he replied:

'You surely would not have me presume; you know I am one of them, and I always like to keep my place.'

The prince often gives us a call; and on one of these occasions he asked leave to bring a companion in exile who has a great taste for drawing, and by means of his pencil maintains himself and a brother who is unfortunately deranged, grief having impaired his intellect. He paints flowers and birds, which he executes in most exquisite style, but unhappily his colours are bad, fading entirely away at the end of a few years. Mr. Atkinson presented him with a box of Winsor and Newton's, with which Mr. Barissoff was charmed; he came several times to watch my husband drawing, and to admire his colours, before he spoke of his own miserable ones.

His first introduction to us was amusing. The prince had made the appointment; and, when they entered the room, he presented his companion by patting him on the head, and saying, 'Allow me to introduce to you a conspirator.' The little man could not help smiling, for indeed he is no bigger than I am, if as big; there was something so ludicrous in the idea of this little man, with his irresistible expression of gentleness, being a conspirator, that the prince himself, after saying it, laughed heartily. It is a source of great pleasure to Barissoff to call upon my husband whenever he can manage to absent himself from his brother, who cannot endure his absence, and who often becomes greatly excited, so that he is afraid to leave him long alone.

I have been presented with a few beautiful sketches by Mr. Barissoff, which have been made expressly for

my album. I am sure you will be gratified by seeing them; they are the birds, flowers, and fruits of Siberia. I have six drawings, they are superb, and I appreciate them highly.

Amongst those who struggle for an existence by their talent, and barely manage to live, is a Pole; and many Poles reside in Irkoutsk. This gentleman being a brother of the brush is one of our constant *habitués*: we are become mutually attached; one cannot but sympathise with men whose only crime is the defence of their country. He was an officer, and taken prisoner when in the act of stepping into his carriage to make a foreign tour; a few hours later and he would have been beyond the reach of those who doomed him to exile.

We are very frequent visitors at the house of the Princess Troubitskoy, a most amiable, clever, and motherly woman, strongly attached to her husband and children, she and the prince devoting all their energies to the education of their eldest daughter, who was born in exile, and has well repaid their efforts, being a most clever and accomplished girl; but her two sisters have been educated at the Imperial Institution in Irkoutsk, where one of them still remains. The princess told me that, without her knowledge or sanction, her mother, the Countess Laval, had applied for and obtained permission from the emperor to have them admitted into this institution, that when the order arrived she was perfectly horrified, but dared not refuse to send them for fear of giving offence. Had she declined sending them, the emperor, she thought, would not grant any favour that might be asked for them at

a later period. One great point she gained was having them home in the evening. There was a marked contrast between the home and public education. The princess speaks English as well nearly as an Englishwoman. The eldest daughter also speaks it well; as she does French, German, and naturally Russian. I say naturally, but many Russians speak the foreign languages better than they do their own. A lady once told me that out of the whole of her acquaintance, she knew but five who spoke and wrote correctly in the Russian language.

The princess often entertains us with anecdotes of past times. She told us one of a countryman of ours, a Mr. Hill, who travelled here. Dining with them one day, and the heat being oppressive, she went with him after dinner into the garden to take coffee. Here she began to ply her needle, and relate a story for his amusement, when finding he made no reply to some question she put to him in the middle of it, she looked up from her work, and found her guest fast asleep. Much surprised, and feeling herself in a most awkward situation, she hesitated whether to leave him or sit still: if she left him, she thought he might fancy she was offended; and if she remained, should she make any remark about the heat sending him to sleep? Whilst she was in this perplexed state of mind he awoke from his slumbers, and made some observation about the story, but without the slightest allusion to, or apology for, his want of politeness. However, the princess went on without hesitation from where she observed he had last heard it, but, alas! for human

weakness, she had not proceeded far when she *heard* he was once more in the land of dreams. When he next woke up, he, with all the coolness imaginable, remarked that he had just had a most delightful dream!

Another story related to his journey to Kiachta. Mr. Hill had engaged a German servant who spoke a little French; and on their arrival in Kiachta there was a large dinner-party given by the director of the custom-house, to which our countryman was invited. He determined that he would take his servant to attend upon him, and stand behind his chair as interpreter. On taking his place at table what was his surprise and horror when he observed that this man, who had represented himself as Mr. Hill's travelling companion, had a seat next to him! He was forced to swallow his resentment, not wishing to make any disturbance before all the company. The German had formerly been a sausage-maker, so when they started on their journey he thought he would speculate in his old trade, and made a large quantity; and on the road Mr. Hill was fed on these and ham, in which also he was trading. Arrived at their destination, he sold those which remained. The director's servant having bought some, a dish of them was produced at table, on observing which the German became exceedingly communicative, remarking to those sitting near him, 'Those are *our* sausages, *we* brought them with us, and *we* have more left;' intending probably to make a fresh supply if he managed to get orders. Thus poor Mr. Hill, who fortunately did not understand the conversation, was looked upon by many as engaged in that delectable trade; and the more so

as, amongst some classes in Russia, all Englishmen are looked upon as shopkeepers and merchants.

An aide-de-camp of the general's visiting one day at our house, in company with the son of a rich merchant, conversation turned upon England, her politics, her ministers, and her nobility. He spoke of all in a most disparaging way, alluding to Sir Robert Peel and his origin; and concluded by asking what rank we had, saying they had all risen from the class of merchants. Mr. Atkinson calmly heard him on to the end, and then said it was a subject he should never attempt to discuss with him; 'for,' said he, 'I perceive when the Almighty created you, He gave you the title of prince, and said, "That is your portion, go forth into the world;" but to Solavioff' (turning to the merchant's son) 'and myself He gave brains, and said, "That is all I can do for you, go forth into the world:" and if, as you state, our nobles spring from such, it is well.' You may judge that after this he never visited our house again. I will tell you when we meet what the prince's father is minister of.

Another family we visit is that of Rosguildaoff, where we spend many an agreeable hour. He was formerly Hetman of the Cossacks, now he is superintendent of Astershoff's priesk on the Yenis-sey. He is a clever and well-informed man, and his wife is a true Siberian, hospitable and generous, but thoroughly imbued with all their superstitions. We were dining with them one day, when the old lady, who had been the same morning to pay her devotions to Saint Irkout, had returned with a marvellous story, with which she

was so impressed that she could think of nothing else. It related to a soldier, who, with many others, had entered the sacred edifice to offer his devotions to this great saint. The regular course was gone through, and he had just stepped forward to kiss the hand of his patron; but, before he had time to press his lips to it, the offended saint raised it, and with one blow gave him such a sound box on the ear, that he sent the poor bewildered soldier sprawling. The story appeared to me so extremely ludicrous, that in spite of every effort I could not restrain my laughter, and, had it not been for the timely aid of the daughter, I should never have reestablished myself in the good graces of the old lady: really, the credulity of mortals is wonderful. I suggested that probably the man was not quite sober, and, having fallen, had invented the fable to cover his own delinquencies, a supposition which horrified her.

A prevailing superstition is that of the Domavoi, literally, house spirit. He is found in every dwelling, and is as much cared for as any other member of the household, if not more; and woe betide the unfortunate individual who neglects or offends this important personage. His good-will is propitiated by the offerings which are daily made to him, food being placed every night in the cellar, which he invariably partakes of. A whole loaf of black bread is at his disposal; of which he eats moderately; and he has a knife in his pocket, because the bread is always found cut. When he has demolished one they put another in its place. I asked the person who related this to me if she really

believed it, whereupon she begged of me not to disbelieve her statements, as the Domavoi might be offended, which they easily were, and to be revenged they sometimes destroyed the building.

On the evening of the 30th of September, we experienced here in Irkoutsk an earthquake. The morning had been fine and frosty, with a fog rising from the Angara. About ten minutes past six in the evening, we were sitting taking tea, when we heard a slight noise as if a light carriage was passing, then the windows began to crack, and immediately the house rocked to and fro, giving us a sharp shake in our chairs. The sky was without a cloud, and not a breath of wind stirring. I own to feeling a great dread come over me, much more than anything I experienced in Kopal. There were no stone buildings there, here we were in one; and another thing, my little boy was away from me, asleep in another room. Earthquakes are not at all uncommon in Irkoutsk.

I think I must have worn out your patience with my tedious descriptions. I have merely done your bidding; you were pleased to say you have been interested with my scribbling, if so, I am satisfied, and would do much to please you. My husband bids me say he intends writing to you shortly; I hope he may do so, as his letters are always amusing. I cannot at present tell you what will be our plans for next summer, many have been suggested. When my husband becomes more fully acquainted with the country, I will let you know in what direction we shall go. It will be in a new region, and among scenes of a totally different

character; but I doubt if we shall find them as fine as those we have already passed through. However, you shall have a faithful account on our return, as there will be no means of sending letters from the parts we shall visit. My husband says, should we be taken and marched off to Pekin, as presents to the Brother of the Sun, we must make the best of it when before his shining majesty; he says he does not believe he will treat us unkindly. I cannot say I entertain any fear on the subject; it would be an incident in life, and highly interesting to see the country.

CHAPTER XII.

Christmas at Irkoutsk—Washing a Husband—Presentation of Chinese Ambassadors—Card-playing for a Wife—Mortality among Children.

Irkoutsk, May 1851.

I MUST thank you for your letter, which I have just received. I am glad to have it before leaving Irkoutsk, which we do this month, and I expect our trip will be highly interesting. You reproach me for not having mentioned Christmas. There was really nothing to speak about, except, it might be, to remark the contrast between a right merry English one, and such as we find here. I wish you could have seen how we spent our Christmas in Kopal, I think you would have been diverted. I have become quite a proficient in Russian dances, as well as my husband, who says if we should ever deign to exhibit our acquirements in this way, we shall decidedly produce a most striking effect; when we do you shall be the judge.

I entirely forgot in my former letters to mention a little incident with my landlady, and as you like to know the customs of the country we are passing through, this will give you an idea of one. There is a great luxury attached to every house in Siberia, that is, a bath. The first week of our arrival I enquired whether

we could have it heated, and I then arranged with my husband that he should go first, the great heat of them being to me insupportable. When all was prepared, Madame Sinitzin herself came to tell me, and gave me all the particulars about the management of it. I then asked whether her coachman could go with Mr. Atkinson (this being customary in other parts of the country). She looked aghast when I asked her, and enquired if I was not going with him. 'I!' I repeated, 'go with him to the bath?' The very idea set me off into a fit of laughing, which highly offended the good creature. Quite huffed, she told me that when her husband was living, she allowed no one to perform the office of washing him but herself; and that it was what every good wife ought to do, and what every good Siberian did. I endeavoured to compose my features, and soothe her ruffled temper by telling her it was a thing unheard of with us; that indeed I believed my husband would faint at the bare mention of it; but she still held to her former opinion, that I was the proper person to wash him.

We were invited by the civil governor of the town to witness the ceremony of the presentation of the Chinese ambassadors to him. I was sadly disappointed, there was literally nothing in it; not one tenth part so interesting as our introduction to our Chinese friends at Chougachac; they only seemed exceedingly awkward sitting on chairs; there was neither the noble air nor the intelligent features of our friends. The interview was very short; and they were regaled with sweetmeats which you would have been amused to see them partake of, but at the same time you would not have relished the

sight; and they were then quartered in the town. It is customary to send them a live sheep daily during their stay. I was greatly entertained by these high officials of his Celestial majesty demanding and receiving money instead of the sheep and candles with which they had been supplied, saying it would be more useful to them, as they wished to purchase a few articles in Irkoutsk. They had more the appearance of brigands than anything else; men who would have made you look to your weapons of defence, had they been met with in the wilds or mountains of Siberia.

I went a few days since with my friend Miss Rosguildaoff to the bazaar, to buy a few articles I wanted for our journey. In one of the magazines was a lady past the heyday of life — she was still good-looking, and must at one time have been very pretty. As she bowed to my friend on entering, I had curiosity enough to enquire who she was, and was told she was a lady who had been lost and won at cards. I asked for an explanation, and learned that she was a Siberian beauty, married young to a gay and rich man, who was, what is very common in Siberia, a great gambler, so that in a few years he ran through the greater part of a large fortune. His wife knew nothing of this; but her eyes were opened when one day a gentleman arrived at their house, which was out of town, and claimed her as his property.

It appeared that the husband and the claimant had been playing the whole night, and the sun had risen high in the heavens before the contest closed; when the former rose a ruined man, having lost every kopeek he was possessed of, besides land, house, furniture, horses, and

even wife; she was his last stake. He asked his adversary whether he would accept her as a stake, he had hoped by this last hazard to retrieve his losses: perhaps it was fortunate for her that he did not, for she has now lived with her victor for twenty years, leading a most happy and exemplary life. It is certainly a novel way for husbands to get rid of their wives.

The Angara opened on the morning of the 21st March, and lovely it is to see the beautiful crystal stream again free from ice. But, unfortunately, as the sun gains power, it is almost unbearable to dwell where we do; every window and door is obliged to be closed. During the winter months, all the refuse of the town was carted and shot down on the banks of this river, by order of the authorities, as the current is continually washing away and undermining them, and they expected by this means to prevent further damage: but the rays of the sun beating on this accumulation of foul matter load the air with anything but a perfume of roses; and owing to this exhalation there is great mortality in the town, principally among children. This makes me uneasy, as our little fellow has been taken suddenly unwell; he is asleep, otherwise I should not be able to continue my letter to you, as he has not been out of my arms a moment this day. I am forced to walk about continually with him, which is now difficult for me, as he grows heavy, and will not allow his nurse to approach him. We likewise have slightly felt the effects of this unhealthy state of the atmosphere, and intend hastening our departure. All our friends are recommending us to take the advice of a doctor about Alatau, but I will

not hear of such a thing; I ask if they have cured one child, if they can show me they have done good, then I will consult one, not otherwise. Leave him to nature, and there is a chance of his life, but employ one of the doctors they have here, and I do not believe there would be the slightest, though I cannot say we are tranquil about him.

The Princess Troubitskoi called to see him, having heard he was ill; the boy is a great favourite with the family. She remarked how much he had improved in looks since our arrival. I told her she would indeed say so had she seen him when he was first born, and the horror we experienced at the sight; he being the exact counterpart in features of a little Kalmuk in our service when on the Katoonia, whom I surnamed Flibberty-gibbet; anyone more atrociously ugly I never beheld. On looking at the boy our exclamations were simultaneous. Flibberty was the most good-natured brave little fellow I ever saw, full of fun, and he was much admired by us; but I was not pleased my boy should be like him in anything but his bravery. He told me (although not more than twenty) that he had a wife and children, I really forget how many; he was greatly diverted because I expressed surprise. Though it is a matter of no importance whether a boy is good-looking or not, provided he is manly, still the princess consoled me by saying he will grow up a very handsome man, all ugly babies do, and instanced her own children; the plain one having been a most beautiful child, and the others who are so beautiful, for they are indeed beautiful, having been plain children. I hope she may be a true prophet, as

it is always more agreeable to a mother's feelings to see a pleasant countenance than otherwise; not that Alatau is so ugly now. At least, there is a satisfaction in knowing that it is not his looks that gain him so many friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

Abrupt Departure from Irkoutsk—Mineral Baths—Again *en route* for the Mountains—The White and Black Irkout—Visit a Gold Priesk—Lead Mine—A Rainbow as seen from a Mountain—Exploration of the Valley of Djemalouk—Extraordinary Aspects of the Scene—Crater in the Valley of Khi-yol—Rapid Rising of the Waters—Unsafe Camping Ground—Kind reception at a Bouriat Aoul—Difficulties of Mountain Travel—Valley of the Oka—Monko-seran-xardick—Lamist Temple—Voyage on the Baikal—Clearness of the Water—Visited by a Robber—A salt Zavod—Servants with Characters—A wholesale Murderer.

Irkoutsk, September 1851.

I ONCE more take up my pen to address you; months have elapsed since my last letter, and we have rambled far, and visited superb localities, of which my feeble efforts can never give you any adequate idea. Toil and fatigue we have undergone; they were to be expected, and I should have thought nothing about it, but the bad weather we have encountered I certainly was not prepared for; it is not exactly what one would choose — to be constantly wet through, with not a dry thread on one. Notwithstanding this little drawback, I have enjoyed my trip amazingly; and have returned, I hope, wiser and better, having learned how little is necessary to render us happy.

I must tell you why my last letter was finished so abruptly. Alatau, as I said, was not well, he afterwards

became very ill indeed, daily growing worse. We were urged by all friends to put off our journey; but instead of doing so we hastened our departure, leaving Irkoutsk on the 23rd of May. Many friends called to take leave of us; and one lady proposed, although she has a number of children of her own, that we should leave Alatau with her. She said our life was so unsettled, and unfit for a child; and that one more in a family was nothing, and she would gladly adopt him. I thanked her, and said it was on his account we were leaving, and most decidedly I should not stir without him; but that I appreciated her kind offer all the same.

On arriving at Koultook, a village on the Baikal, I found the child worse. I then began to reproach myself for having left in spite of all remonstrances, and said so to Mr. Atkinson, who declared that, if he were not better after visiting some hot mineral springs where we were going, we should return to Irkoutsk. We slept at Koultook, as we wished to see the officer of that place, and the following evening arrived at our destination. The little man grew worse; and I was all anxiety till I had plunged him into the bath, there being one into which the spring runs within the building. I did not detain him a moment longer than necessary, and then preparing his bed I laid him down, when he was quickly asleep. Seeing him sleeping so comfortably, I started with my husband for a stroll, leaving the Cossack on guard, and requesting him to send for me should he awake.

The spring gushes out of a rock in a small but picturesque valley, with high rocks on each side, and

the river Ikouogoon running through it. The spring is on the left side, where the archbishop has built a house for the accommodation of pilgrims and visitors, who often frequent this spot. Opposite a mass of rock, overshadowed and surrounded by trees, stands a small but pretty church, the effect of which was beautiful; so calm and quiet; and shut out from the noise of the busy world, with no other sound save the murmuring and rippling of the water as it flowed over the stones.

We had crossed the river to examine the church. As we stood looking at it the priest joined us and entered into conversation; he showed us the interior, the paintings were very poor; still it was pretty. He then took us a short walk up the valley to point out the scenes which he admired; but all that could be said of them was, that they were pretty, quiet, and homely.—a place where you would expect a hermit to take up his abode, nothing grand. Our new friend would have gone farther, but I declined, saying I dared not go on account of having a sick child; on which he told me to be very careful, and avoid bathing him in the spring, 'for,' said he, 'if you do, you will kill him to a certainty. Many,' he continued, 'come here thinking to cure themselves by these waters; but all die who bathe in them, not one survives; and I always warn them, but they will not be persuaded: we had a man died here about a month since, who came imagining this place would do him good.' You may suppose that every word he uttered went like a dagger to my heart, for I had been similarly advised in Irkoutsk, but would listen to no one.

The priest entered our room, where he sat chatting a long time. I never watched for the departure of a guest with such anxiety as I watched for his; at length he took his leave, when I gave vent to my pent-up feelings in showers of tears. I had not courage to tell him that I had already bathed the child; and, with a heart overflowing with grief, had been obliged to be gay and talk, the poor priest little guessing what anguish he had caused me.

I lay down to rest, not hoping for much sleep; lately the boy had kept us continually awake; however, like a child, I wept myself to sleep, and was awakened by a little voice calling out 'I am hungry.' I can tell you I started to my feet pretty quickly, for he had not tasted food since leaving Irkoutsk, and was so reduced that he had not strength to stand. On looking at my watch I was surprised to find that it was nearly five o'clock, he had slept without moving the whole night. I was not long making my toilette, and, as the bath had produced such a marvellous effect, before breakfast I plunged him in again, and from that hour dated his recovery. We had merely intended passing a night here; but as the waters appeared to have done the boy so much good, we resolved to spend a couple of days; at the end of which he was so much improved as to be able to walk again. It seemed almost miraculous that in so short a space of time could have been worked so great a change. I was very careful not to let him remain long in the bath; just sufficient time to wash him in the evening, and in the morning a single plunge.

From this place we started for the mountains. What

scenes of winter and summer we passed over! At times our resting-place was a carpet of flowers, at others we spread our bear-skins on the snow, and one night Alatau asking for water, when I got it ice was in it. In some spots we passed over vegetation had not commenced, whilst in others close by everything was in bloom. Before reaching the White Irkout we had to ride over a bed of ice. To me it was a singular sight: active when all beneath was frozen; the trees budding, while the stems were buried deep in snow.

To tell you of the sublime scenery on the White and Black Irkout (so called because the former is always white and foaming, and the latter black as Erebus) would almost be a repetition of what I have already said. I will only mention that up the White Irkout we came upon a most glorious scene: the torrent had cut a passage through the mountain, just like a great portal; this, with the water rushing and foaming through, had a magical effect.

After leaving these rivers we had a mountain to ascend and cross, called Nouka Daban, which was difficult on account of the heavy rains we had had, indeed, the horses could scarcely maintain their footing. On arriving at the summit our path was over a dreary waste, without either tree or shrub, but plenty of snow, both old and fresh. A keen cutting wind was blowing, which made us shiver and our teeth chatter. We came upon two lakes, in one of which the Black Irkout has its source, and in the other, two versts farther on, the Oka. Our path lay between these, and difficult I can

tell you it was, being a bog or morass, into which our horses sank above the saddle flaps; this only happens after heavy rains, or the melting of the snow in the upper ranges. Having passed this, we descended into the valley of the Oka, when the rain began pouring down in torrents, which made us glad to seek for a spot to encamp. Could you have seen us seated within our canvass dwelling, with the rain pouring in torrents outside, I think it likely you would have thought us the most miserable beings in existence. Whereas, could you have comprehended our feelings, you would have known that with a shelter, frail though it was, from the raging storm; with a cheerful blaze in front, appreciated the more on account of the difficulty we had in raising it; — and with a glass of hot tea, we thought ourselves superlatively happy, especially after what we had passed through: even the boy crept close to us, and looked with a pleased smile on the crackling logs.

We now started for a gold priesk belonging to a gentleman in Irkoutsk. We were acquainted with both the directors, one being the stepson of the lady in whose house we were living in Irkoutsk, and the other an exiled Pole, as good a creature as ever lived. His joy at seeing us was great. We have been to places where every luxury was to be had; here, humble though everything was, we received a most hearty welcome from our friend Napoleon. He never allowed us to give him any other name. The most polite way of addressing a person in Russia is by their Christian name coupled with that of the father. This mode of addressing him he begged of me to drop, it was *Russian*, 'and in the

company of my friends I wish to forget the country,' he said.

I had a most horrible fit of indigestion at this place, solely brought on by a dislike to disoblige. Although the dinner hour was an early one, I never would consent to sup. I invariably made a good tea, and this I found sufficient. However, one evening whilst at the priesk (we made it our head-quarters for some days) Napoleon came to tell me he had found out I had a penchant for kidneys, and I surely would not refuse. I said, 'No! I would not.' Besides it was really nothing. However, when we went to supper, I cannot picture to you the horror I experienced when I saw smoking on the table a bullock's kidney, boiled. I positively had not courage to say I could not partake of it, my friend looked so supremely happy. I really fancied I should be ill. Had I been hungry, as I have been many a time, I should, I doubt not, have enjoyed it. There have been times when the very dust from our rusks was considered a luxury; but to eat this, and not hungry, was horrible.

Since leaving Irkoutsk scarcely a day has passed without storms of thunder and rain. These have greatly damaged the machinery, besides washing away the gold sand. In ordinary times this is not a very profitable place; indeed, I believe it will not be worked next summer. It is situated close to the frontiers of China, and I should not be surprised if large quantities of gold march in that direction, indeed many believe they do.

From this place we visited a lead mine belonging to a Frenchman. On the road to it we passed many Bouriat winter dwellings, sheltered in a pretty well-

wooded valley, with a broad and rapid stream running through it. These people differ from the Kirghis in having fixed abodes. They are exceedingly aristocratic, possessing both summer and winter dwellings. Farther on we found them in their summer habitations, surrounded by numbers of horses and cattle, but few sheep. The men are more industrious than the Kirghis, though not so gentlemanly-looking; whereas the women, some of them, were really pretty, which is probably owing to their not being so hard worked.

To reach Mr. Alibere's mine we had a mountain to ascend from the valley of the Oka, which led us into a region of lakes, near which the road was very bad, caused by the deep morass, where we were floundering about in mud and water at every step we took. Unpleasant though it was, we had crossed worse places; and we rather astonished our host when we told him so. Once arrived, we found everything we could desire except cleanliness, and this it was impossible to have, the black lead penetrating everything. Our host had wisely built a bath, a very necessary precaution. He has a farm some ten versts distant, so that his table was supplied with butter, cream, and vegetables, fresh daily; this was more than we expected to find, I never thought to have even a potato.

From this mountain, which is dome-shaped, I saw what to me was a wonderful sight, and the effect of which was beautiful, viz. a rainbow *beneath, not above us*; I never saw such a thing before, nor have I seen it since.

We had some difficulty with Alatau over the morass, so resolved to invest a little money in the purchase of a pair of reindeer from a Samoiyede family,

the only one said to be existing in these regions. They live in tents like the Tartars, conical and covered with skin; their dress also consists of skins. However, we found it a useless investment. The saddle was continually getting twisted, and I learned from our men that it required great tact for even a grown person to sit comfortably. So after the first day's riding, we were obliged to abandon the use of them, and seat the boy on a horse, where he rode very comfortably. The delays in arranging his saddle on the reindeer impeded our progress greatly. He was obliged to be strapped on his horse; and it was rather fatiguing for him to be seated so many hours as he sometimes was. When sleep overtook him, we were obliged to carry him, which we did in turns.

We now directed our steps to Okinskoi Karaoul, where we crossed the river Oka, and turned our horses in the direction of a beautiful but singular valley, that of the Djemalouk, down which the fiery torrent had run damming up the river and forming small lakes, while in other places the flood is lost under the lava for ten and twenty versts together. At times we rode along the edge of the lava, at others, over its bed, in which there were deep fissures, demanding the greatest care to wend our way amongst them. Had I not been trained in a rough school, I should have hesitated proceeding, though I believe nothing would daunt me now. The day was fine, making our ride enchanting, in spite of the little difficulties, and more especially as we ascended the base of a mountain, and rode through a thick forest of gigantic trees. Having traversed the wood for two

hours, during which time Alatau had often asked for his dinner, we arrived at a small torrent which came tumbling down the mountain. The spot was beautiful, and here we determined to dine. Our carpet was soon spread in a garden of roses and other flowers, and Alatau was quickly in among them gathering nosegays, for flowers are his delight; our hats and horses' heads were always decked with fresh flowers daily when we were in their region. Such a day as this was compensated for all the ills we had hitherto met with on our way, in the shape of rain and bogs. I felt loth to quit the spot; the delight of the boy was so great, tumbling about,—but we must on: leaving our dining-room, we all mounted our horses and away. We had still to ride through the forest, when we came upon a most wild and rugged scene; huge rocks had been hurled on to the bed of lava from the precipice above. We halted to look at them, and to speculate when they had come tumbling down; and came to the conclusion that it must have been during some great convulsion, and when the boiling mass had not yet cooled: others had fallen at a later period, and lay on the top. What a sight this must have been, could anyone have witnessed it!

We spent several days exploring this valley. At one point, where it was impossible to go on horseback, Mr. Atkinson decided upon going on foot, leaving part of the men and a Cossack with me. I should have gone, but I had not courage enough to leave the boy alone with the men for two or three nights. It was well, perhaps, that I did not, as every man returned bootless; the lava had cut their boots entirely to pieces.

The discomfort of the journey would have been a mere trifle, for all they had was the produce of their guns, with biscuit, salt, and tea. Each man carried something; one a kettle, in which tea was made, and a saucepan; another grain and flour; and my husband tea and biscuit, and a towel; each one had a coat or a voilock strapped on to his back. When they stopped to dine, we saw the smoke of their fires, and after that nothing more till their return. We all felt anxious, not knowing what they might encounter. On the evening of the fourth day, the boy and myself were taking tea, when we were startled, yet gladdened, by the report of their guns. There was a general rejoicing, and as the day had been cool, fresh logs were thrown on to the fire, and all looked bright and sparkling. Then one of the men was quickly called to sweep the *dining* and *drawing* room, over which my son had made a litter,—flowers were lying in every direction,—this was soon done, a broom having been procured from a neighbouring tree. Tea, that ever-refreshing beverage, was spread on the grass, and all ready when they arrived. Had we been lodged in a palace, I doubt whether we should have felt as happy as we did sitting round our camp-fire, hearing all that had taken place. When the men had refreshed themselves, they too came and squatted down by our fire, to give their account of the journey.

The valley up which they had wandered was called the Khi-yol, at the upper part of which they discovered the crater whence the fearful lava torrent had poured. This was interesting to Mr. Atkinson, proving he was

correct in the opinion he had formed, that that was the valley up which the crater must be sought, and not the Kara-noor, which we had previously visited, and whence he at first believed the lava had issued.

After a few more explorations in this direction, we started on our return to the Oka, thanking God for having favoured us with lovely weather. But after this respite our old enemy returned with redoubled force; for several days we had almost continued thunder, lightning, and rain. Streams, small when previously passed, were now large torrents, and, on arriving at the Oka, right glad were we to take shelter in a Cossack's dwelling, where we had not been long established before we both declared it was worse than the rain, there being such a number of screaming tiresome children, who almost deafened us with their noise. At length there was a break in the heavy clouds, and the rain for awhile abated, which we immediately profited by to choose a spot on the banks of the river, where we could pitch our tent. Here we found quiet, and congratulated each other on the change. The Ouradnik from the Karaoul visited us, and said the water was unusually high, caused by the heavy rains in the upper mountains. We watched with much interest the rising of the water, mark after mark was so quickly covered that we considered it necessary to have the opinion of the Cossacks before we lay down to rest. In spite of our wish to remove, they one and all said there was no occasion, that it would not reach us, never having been so high before in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant. However, it was thought prudent to set

a watchman to warn us, in case of its rising high enough to endanger us, which we had a notion it was doing rapidly.

As we had suspected, between one and two in the morning, the Bouriat called loudly to us, saying the water was up to the tent, and then ran off to call the Cossacks, who were with us in a few minutes.

Can you conceive rising from bed and turning out in a pouring rain? Taking the boy in my arms, I seated myself on a stone, till our house was erected on a safer spot, quite high on the bank: but even here it reached us, and we had again to remove. When all was fixed, I again made my bed (we had no candles), and in an hour from the commencement, I was once more snug under the furs, now doubly enjoyable after sitting so long in the soaking rain. I think now what a figure I must have cut, enveloped in voilock, and a large wide-awake on the top of my nightcap. These hats are the most useful things imaginable; they protect you from the sun, and serve as umbrellas in the rain. I do believe there is nothing more disagreeable than to have rain trickling down one's back; a good soaking is nothing; but patter, patter, just between the collar and the neck is horrible. I once had a cap, but I soon discarded it for the hat, which I found invaluable.

During all this bustle of moving, Alatau, poor child, slept on, having not the slightest idea of what was passing. He was born in a noise, and has lived ever since in one. In Kopal, when I had to join in the merry-making, I always took him with me, and laid him, wrapped in my shawl, on a bench or somewhere;

when he would sleep on in spite of noise, or drums, or anything.

The next day we saw plainly enough that there was no chance of crossing till the water had subsided. The boats, which had been tied to trees growing on the bank, were now about the middle of the stream, with no possibility of reaching them; and before the day was over we had the satisfaction of seeing one of them carried away, and the other went during the night, tree and all. But, what was most remarkable was the incredible number of large trees that were swept past; at times it was a continued line of fine old timber. I never saw such a sight. We occupied ourselves the greater part of the day watching these giants of the forest moving rapidly along. Farther on our road we came to a place where some Bouriats were in great grief, the flood having swept away two of their dwellings, women, children, and all; it was heartrending to hear them wailing for them. Not a single Bouriat remembered such a flood. On the morning of the third day, on looking out of our canvass home, we saw a clear bright sky, with every prospect of a fine day, and the water greatly subsided. This was good news, and when the Ouradnik came he said he would send to the Bouriats for a small canoe to take us over, as soon as it would be safe to do so.

What a different aspect everything wears on a fine bright day! All nature seemed to feel the change, even the goats and lambs, for they frisked about and afforded a fund of amusement to my son, who is a great lover of all animals. When he finds the footprint of any of

the wild ones, he calls out 'Papa, Caziole!' or 'Cossack, Caziole!' as the case may be; he knows them well, the Cossacks took pains to teach him, and he always has an eye to the larder. If we may judge of the future man from the child, we may presume he will be extremely provident. He had observed the men had difficulty at times in finding bark to set light to the fire; so without being perceived by anyone, he filled his pockets, and when we stopped to dine, produced it, amidst shouts of laughter from the Cossacks and Bouriats. He is a source of amusement to them all. When once on the way, he does not give me much concern till we again encamp.

On the morning of the 12th of July, we packed up and prepared to cross, which was a work of time and danger, as only one at a time could be paddled over. Before starting I went to take leave of a Cossack's wife, and to offer her a little money for several kindnesses she had done, and bread which she had made and sent me; but no persuasions could induce her to take it. I felt uncomfortable, and said I could not think of going away in her debt. After a little hesitation she told me the greatest kindness I could do her, if she dared ask for such a thing, would be to present her with a tumbler; for when the priest visited them, which he did a certain number of times in the year, she could offer him tea out of it; adding that he was expected shortly, and always visited her. You may be sure I gave it, with a few other articles which I observed would be acceptable; and left her the happiest woman in the place, there not being such a thing as a tumbler at

Okniskoi Karaoul. The money would have bought her a dozen, but she had no means of procuring them, thus it was as useless to her as it is to the Kirghis.

This night we slept at a Bouriat aoul; it was a pleasant spot, near a small stream; they appeared a superior class to any we had yet passed. We entered their yourts, in one of which we found a very pretty black-eyed young woman, with cheeks like roses, not ruddy like a milkmaid's, but of a delicate tint; she wore a closely fitting black velvet jacket, which became her amazingly; and her head was adorned with the usual ornaments. Saluting me after the fashion of the country, she asked us to enter.

We were much interested with the picture of their Deity, very nicely painted on silk. In each yourt we found an altar, on which is placed a number of brass cups or small basins, filled with the articles offered up to the Deity. For instance, wine (or rather a strong spirit made from milk), butter, tea, coffee, milk, and sugar. At the bottom of the altar they frequently burn their offerings on little wooden blocks. The master of the yourt handed us a cup of the wine, which I declined, and passed it to Mr. Atkinson, who merely tasted it, but the old man soon became quite tipsy. I think he had a little before we entered. They drink it in large quantities. In each dwelling we were treated in a similar manner.

Having bid adieu to the good people, we were once more on our way, but on arriving at the Oka, we found it impossible to cross, the water was so high and rapid. As we should have had to cross it four times in the space

of twenty versts, we decided on going over the mountains, which was extremely difficult. The ascent was both bad and dangerous, caused by the heavy rains. Having reached the summit, we found nothing but morass, which was positively frightful; the men had several times to get off their horses to drag them out of the deep mire. After wading through this bog for hours, we found the sun was fast declining, therefore at seven o'clock we determined to encamp. This we did on the side of a steep hill, being the only dry spot we could discover, on some blocks of granite which had been washed down by the torrent ages ago: we could distinctly hear water gurgling beneath us.

This was indeed a rugged bedroom, still we were glad to get even such a place to lie down upon after our long and fatiguing ride of ten hours. I found great difficulty in spreading the bear-skins, there not being a single level spot. One of the Cossacks aided me with stones and branches, and I believed our efforts were successful, at least I can say our sleep was, in defiance of all discomforts; but when we awoke we found our bed in quite a different place from that in which it was when we lay down. I cannot say we had slept on a bed of down, which I always declare I mean to have wherever and whenever we settle, as a recompense to my poor bones for all they have endured; at times they are really sore, just as if I had been beaten. Now that we are in a town, I look upon my bed, which is nothing but the bare boards of a bedstead covered with my bear-skins, as a perfect luxury.

Our road this day in many respects resembled the

previous one, till we reached some sand-hills, near the river Sarock, when it was better for some distance till we crossed the river, the men going first. When I saw them, I never believed it possible I should keep my saddle. One of the Bouriats was unhorsed, naturally affording merriment to all those who had passed safely. The river was not wide, but in the only part of the bank where we could get up, there was a deep hole filled with mud, sand, water, and all the horrors imaginable; into this hole the hind legs of the horses sank deep, and they plunged awfully. After crossing, we descended the left bank, where we had morass to our hearts' content, several of the horses actually lying down in it. You may guess what dread I was in lest mine should do the same, when I looked at the condition the men were in.

I was highly flattered and puffed up by Mr. Atkinson saying, 'However you keep your saddle I cannot understand.' It would never have done to have been unhorsed after this. At ten o'clock we had got over our difficult ride: a worse or less interesting one I scarcely ever took; we were all bespattered with mud from the terrible plunges of our horses.

I presume the idea of dining at ten o'clock in the morning will sound strange to your ears: twelve was our usual hour, but at this place we thought it necessary for both horses and ourselves to recruit our strength; still our fare was as hard as our ride had been, never having come across a living thing during the last two days. After this our track lay along the valley of the Oka, which was very pleasing; and one night we again took up our abode at a Bouriat aoul. You should see

my son amongst them, dancing Bouriat dances; he has also learned one of their native songs, which he and a Cossack sing together, to the great delight of the Bouriats.

We had a great dread about crossing the Nooka Daban, and not, I assure you, without cause, the heavy rains having rendered it almost impassable; however, we did pass it in safety, Providence having guided our steps; otherwise it might have been our last ride, for we were caught in a dense fog, and could not see a yard of our way. It was quite impossible to stop, we must proceed: there was neither wood nor water to be had; and, besides there being nothing for the horses to pasture on, the fog might last several days. We knew that one false step might lead us to rugged precipices where we should have been dashed to pieces long ere we reached the bottom. Alatau had been removed from his own horse, and was seated on his father's saddle, and covered with his cape; before he was placed there he had repeated several times, 'I so tired;' he had been many hours on horseback, and this together with the dreary ride had fatigued him. Since the commencement of the fog we had been riding 'goosem,' as the Russians call it (that is, like geese). However after some hours the fog cleared off, and when the precipices became visible I really shuddered. I now rode up to my husband, and learned that the boy was asleep. I opened the cape a little to take a peep, but I found his eyes open and as bright as ever; he gave me a smile, and to the amusement of the Cossacks bade me close the *balagan* (the tent). I presume he had a fear that he was going to be placed

on his horse again, and the roaring of the wind was not over pleasant.

We now spent some days in exploring Monko Seran Xardick, and the Lake Kossogol, where we had most magnificent views, the scenery about the lake reminding us of our beloved Alatau chain — only on a small scale; it was truly beautiful.

On one part of our ride we found the flood had carried away the road, and made a new channel, having washed away thousands of trees, some of which were now strewn about like straws. It is wonderful what power water has; what we here contemplated seemed almost incredible. Only two months earlier we had passed through a thick forest of mighty larch trees, and in their place now flowed the Irkout in a broad deep channel. We had to seek a road up the side of a hill. We had ridden some distance when it became so steep that all were forced to descend from their horses, take them by the bridles, and scramble up by clinging to the branches of the trees; but I clung fast to my animal, declaring that if he was able to climb, he might easily carry me. So seizing him by the mane, I stuck to him like a leech, all the men calling out I should fall; however, I succeeded. I never give myself the trouble of surmounting the difficulties met with in ascending a mountain on foot, when a horse can carry me. At Monko Seran Xardick I had ascended all kinds of places, where a horse could not possibly go: but there was a necessity for my doing so; and my boots gave proofs of what I had done, being cut to pieces by the lava.

The next place of interest we stopped at was the

Lamist temple. After some delay one of the Lamas was found to admit us into the interior. It was very curious and very interesting, and we deeply regretted we could not see the service performed; but the principal Lama was so *drunk* that he could not officiate: this was a great disappointment, as it would have been highly interesting to me to have heard the chanting and the musical instruments. There were many timbrels, a large gong, cymbals, trumpets, bells, and a sort of hautboy, which makes a terrible sound; also an immense sliding trumpet, which would shake the temple with its clangour. The Lama sounded some of the instruments to show the effect. The temple was filled with offerings of various-coloured silks, which were hanging from the ceiling, and produced a very pretty effect; besides which, there were banners hanging from grotesque heads, worked in silk. We spent some time in examining the temple, and then left it with regret, not having seen all we wished.

We now bade adieu to the Lama, thanking him for his courtesy, and, remounting our horses, rode off, directing our course towards the Baikal. Before arriving at Tounka, we had another atrocious road to go over; about seven versts of it were nearly impassable, it was like a sea of mud, and took us three hours to go the distance. After passing Tounka it is a post road, but it was fortunate we had no carriage, it would have taken fifty horses to drag the pavoska through. Just as we were starting from one of the stations, an old friend from Irkoutsk rode up. How agreeable it is to meet with a face one knows an a journey like this! and the

exclamations are always rather astounding to those near. However, this meeting caused us to dismount, and then we all came to the determination of spending the evening together, and starting at daybreak the following morning. We wished to hear the Irkoutsk news, and Mr. Nemeroffsky (the Pole) had in his turn to enquire where we had been, and what we had seen. He was going on a visit to his comrade at the priesk. I told him of the difficulties of the road; but he having been to Kamschatka knew what it would be like: however, he afterwards told me that the Kamschatka road was nothing to this, and he did not go over the difficult part, he merely crossed between the lakes and to the lead mine.

At Koultook we were delayed two days whilst a boat was got ready for our voyage on the Baikal. The first night I found it impossible to close my eyes, it was a repetition of the one spent at the old man's cottage on our return from the Katoonia. In the morning the head man of the village, in whose house we were stopping, came to enquire how we had passed the night. I complained bitterly to him of the *insects*, and said I would sleep in the boat; but he advised me, as the ground around was so wet, to sleep in the flour magazine. I said the damp was nothing, I was accustomed to it: but at the same time I believed it would be advisable to accept his offer. When night came I spread the bear-skins, and, being thoroughly worn out for want of sleep, soon dropped off, and never woke again till daybreak. When we emerged into regions of light, for there were no windows in our sleeping apartment,

though just sufficient light from the cracks and crevices to grope about with, the host again accosted me, to know how I had slept, but with the addition that he hoped the *rats* had not troubled us much. When he said this I almost shrieked; I asked, if he really meant to say there were rats? 'Oh yes,' said the old man; 'and whenever I have slept there, which I sometimes do in summer, that being the coolest place, they annoy me very much; but I thought perhaps you would not mind it.'

We were not particularly struck with our voyage on the Baikal; there was nothing grand or fine in the scenery. What a contrast between it and Altin Kool, which far surpasses anything to be found here! Certainly this is well worth seeing, but not for an artist, except it was visited before Altin Kool. But the storms on it were very fine. It was magnificent to remark the changes that came over the lake. At one moment we would be looking at it when it was as clear as crystal, and revealing everything within; the rocks at the bottom discernible at a great depth, and on them at times even the little fish lying dead; when suddenly a storm would rise, entirely changing its aspect, heaving it into billows, and hiding everything from view.

Speaking of the clearness of the water reminds me that at Listvenitza we slept one night at a widow's cottage. Before leaving in the morning, I gave her money, for which she thanked me very much, and said, 'I should never have thought of accepting such a thing from guests had my husband been living.' She then

went on to say he had been dead some years. He was a fisherman, and was sometimes absent two or three days at a time, but always returned when he saw a storm brewing. One day while he was away, a storm arose very suddenly, which lasted two days; on the third its violence decreased, but he did not return, and some of his companions went in search. They expected to find him along the shore, thinking some accident might have happened to his boat; and proceeded a long distance at great risk to themselves, as the storm had not yet quite gone down; but nowhere could they see anything of him. Returning, the lake having become calmer, they saw him lying at the bottom, as she said, just as if he was sleeping, quite calm and composed, with the image which they wear round the neck clasped in his hand.

After passing Listvenitza we several times had a chance of lying at the bottom of the Baikal ourselves, especially where the wind suddenly rushes down the valleys, when it catches the frail boat, and nearly capsizes it; and besides, our boatmen were not the most skilful, being principally Bouriats; but decidedly in singing they surpassed any we had ever heard. Mr. Atkinson is of opinion that a Bouriat concert would be very taking; it certainly would be difficult in Petersburg to collect the singers, but not so in London; all that would be required would be a flock of sheep. However, I can tell you they drove me almost crazy by their noise; but they seemed so perfectly happy that I had not courage to ask them to cease their Baa-a-a-a-a! We have been spending the evening with the Taskins.

Mr. Taskin is an engineer officer; and when I asked him if he had ever heard the Bouriats on the Baikal sing, he gave me in answer one of their songs, accompanied by music; it was bad enough in the open air, but in the room it was deafening.

I will tell you of a little journey we made to a waterfall on the river Hook, below Nijni Oudinsk. Mr. Atkinson went to sketch it for a gentleman residing in Irkoutsk; he and the archbishop had been the discoverers of it, and both believed it *finer* than the *Falls of Niagara*. On arriving at the spot you should have seen our astonishment. Why, had my son been a little bigger he might have jumped over it! I grant it was very pretty, as it came tumbling over the rocks, and would have been considered a wonderful sight in any garden; but it was perfectly preposterous to ask anyone to go more than a thousand versts for such a trumpery thing.

This journey was a very disastrous one; in the first place we were robbed on the second station from Irkoutsk. We had been travelling several nights sucessively, but came to the determination not to stop a day till we had finished what there was to do; therefore merely supped with some friends in Irkoutsk, and then started on our way to Nijni Oudinsk. Being tired, we and the Cossack also fell asleep, shortly after changing the horses, when I was awoke by a heavy hand on my face. I said to my husband, 'Your hand hurts me;' it was removed the instant I spoke, when I again dozed off. On stopping at the station I searched for my bag, which contained a quantity of copper coin and small silver money. I always deposited it safely at the back of my head, and

where I could lay my hand upon it immediately, as I am paymaster; but it was gone. We were travelling paraclodnoi, and the leather at the back had been cut open, and without doubt it was the thief's hand that had been resting on my face. My bag was a sad loss; besides containing the two bags of money, there was a confused mass of articles: for instance, a telescope of Mr. Atkinson's; ear-rings and beads to give away; my boy's socks and shoes, the only pair I had; a tiny pocket bible, presented to me in Ekaterinburg; bags of dried fruit for the child, and a host of other things. You can fancy how annoying it was; we gave information to the police, but nothing was heard of them, nor ever will be. I have since learned that persons are often robbed on that station, even the governor's carriage was not sacred, something was stolen from it. All this was nothing in comparison to my husband having taken cold, and being confined to his bed for fifteen days.

Going to Nijni Oudinsk, we stopped at a salt zavod. It was the early morning when we arrived, and no one was up. We descended from our equipage, and finding the doors unlocked entered, and had our baggage brought in. We then bathed and dressed, and Mr. Atkinson taking the boy by the hand went into the garden, where he found Mr. Taskin (brother to the engineer officer), who was much surprised at seeing him, not having the faintest notion we were there. I tell you this to make you understand the absence of all fear of robbery or murder; and I am sure I shall surprise you when I tell you that the whole of the workpeople employed in this zavod are *convicts*.

Mme. Taskin told me that free servants were not allowed, and all those in her establishment had committed some desperate crime. We slept a night here to give us time to see things, and the maid who was deputed to serve me, and slept in the next room to me, had *murdered* her *master*; and on my door was neither *bolt* nor *lock*. The one who was maid to the children had poisoned her mistress. You will think we have taken up our abode in a nest of crime. Mme. Taskin likewise told me that when she first went to the zavod, some years before, her husband had to go on a tour of inspection a few days after their arrival, and she was left alone with these people; and, moreover, the same girl who attended me had to sleep in her room, as one of the children was ill. She said she scarcely closed her eyes the whole night, and, when she did for a second doze off, she woke up in a fright, thinking the girl was going to murder her. This feeling soon wore off, and she declares they are the best servants she ever had; she prefers them to any other. There are few of these people but have been driven to commit crime by the brutal conduct of their masters; but pray do not run away with the idea that it is everywhere the same in Russia. It is no more so than that every man brutally treats his wife in England; because instances are met with, it does not prove that the whole nation is the same. Some of the men are steeped in the deepest crimes; one, for instance, whom we went to see was in chains, and a guard of Cossacks was placed over him. He had owned to committing *seventy* murders. He was an escaped convict, and had been caught, and was now

awaiting his trial. To look at the man no one could have thought he was such a desperate character: he had an exceedingly pleasing and mild face.

The history of these people would really be curious. I was sorry we made such a short stay, or I might have collected a host of facts relating to them.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Birthday Ball—Singular Wedding Custom—Excitement amongst the Exiles—Anticipated general Pardon—An Escape and Recapture—The poor German Exile and his Wife—Attempted Reform in Dress, and Check on Habits of Intemperance—A drunken Dignitary of the Church—Projected Visit to Kiachta.

Irkoutsk, January 1852.

BEFORE saying what we are doing, I must thank you for being so kind as to execute my commissions. I find everything very nice, the mantillas I consider beautiful; and, still better, they are pronounced to be so by all the ladies in Irkoutsk. The gloves I am very glad to have. I cannot procure any here for less than two silver roubles per pair; thus I save on each pair three quarters of a rouble: so the gloves alone more than pay for the postage.

I dare say you will be surprised at the difficulty there is in procuring good tea here. Many persons send to Petersburg for it, whence they have it cheaper and better; and yet we are close to the great mart, but it is only those who have acquaintance in Kiachta who can procure it from there. I have a friend here who receives it in large quantities, and who is good enough to supply my wants. I expect we are going to Kiachta, where I mean to provide myself with a goodly quantity.

Thanks also for the present you sent to Alatau. Since

his birth he has cost me nothing more for clothing than the one piece of silk I bought in Kopal. In Barnaoul he was loaded with material for dresses, and amongst the prettiest were some of white linen, edged and embroidered with red, with red silk belts; they are in the Russian peasant style, which I think beautiful. Here it is the same; the only articles I buy are shoes and socks, and these come from Petersburg; and, besides, S—— has sent him many dresses. I can assure you my son is a most fashionable young gentleman. One dress presented to him by Mme. Zarine, the wife of the civil governor, was of a most beautiful Chinese material, called granitoor, it is a rich thick silk, but curled like crape. This was the boy's visiting costume, which he wore with the black velvet cap. you sent him; it corresponds prettily with the dress, which is pink trimmed with silver lace and buttons; he has been greatly complimented on his appearance.

He has had a ball to celebrate his third birthday. All his little companions were invited, this is the second one he has had, and right merrily have they enjoyed themselves: such romps, and dancing too; the musician being a *musical box*. I gave them a surprise at supper, viz. a Christmas pudding. How the little eyes were dilated when they saw it come flaming into the room! It produced a grand effect, but the flavour was more appreciated by the elders than by the babies. It is the first plum-pudding ever made in Irkoutsk. The following day I had numbers who came for a *taste*, and all regretted they had not seen the grand sight.

There has been no end of balls and evening parties,

which differ only in not being in full ball costume; formerly I excused myself by saying I had a baby; but now there is no such excuse, and I am obliged to go. There have been several weddings, and these cause them to be gayer. I must tell you that, when Mme. Zarine's niece was married, I knew the day they were going to make me a visit, so bade the nurse girl not to take the child away, as they would like to see him. She was on the balcony with him, when suddenly she rushed into the room and screamed out, 'Here they are!' 'Who?' I asked. 'The new-married people,' she replied.

I must tell you that it is customary in Siberia for the newly married couple to go round to all their friends, accompanied by a band of musicians. In each house they stop at a room is quickly made ready, when all join in a dance; this ended, the hosts present champagne, and should they be poor, the wedding party have a supply with them; the health of the newly married couple is drunk, another dance is gone through, then off they are to some other place. They are probably joined by some one from each house they stop at, till at length there is a long line of carriages and droshkys, and the evening concludes with a supper. If the acquaintance is numerous, this lasts for two or three weeks.

Now my maiden had seen a military band accompanied by some droshkys, and in the simplicity of her heart imagined it must be the governor's niece. When they really did come, she was sadly put out, expecting to have seen a very grand affair, considering their position, and moreover residing in the house of the governor. She thought Siberian fashions far superior to

those of Petersburg, where nobody could see there was anything uncommon, and she had always been told that where the Tzar lived everything was very fine; she used to wish to see Petersburg, but now she had no such wish.

A circumstance connected with the exiles has caused an immense sensation in Irkoutsk. For the last two months they have been in a great state of excitement. Amongst their intimate friends the conversation has constantly run on the subject nearest their hearts, viz. their liberation from exile, which it was firmly hoped and believed would take place on the 25th anniversary of the emperor's ascending the throne. All expected an estafette to that effect, and as the day drew near it was painful to observe the anxiety depicted on each countenance: some believed a courier would be sent express, others that it would come through the post; but none doubted the fact, that the joyful intelligence would eventually arrive. At length the day of accession came and passed, damping in some degree their hopes, still not altogether extinguishing them; as they now believed that only on the anniversary would the order for their freedom be despatched. They became in a measure more tranquil, as a fortnight must elapse ere a courier could reach Irkoutsk. The fortnight passed, but without bringing the long-looked-for pardon; still they clung like drowning people to a straw. Perhaps something had happened to the courier which might have delayed him; but time passed, and post after post arrived without bringing the earnestly desired announcement; and unwillingly they were forced to abandon the last hope. Sad though all were, by degrees they ceased talking on

the painful subject; till one day a tremendous uproar was raised in the town, by the arrival in haste of a mounted Cossack. All were immediately on the *qui vive*, never doubting but this was the estafette; but ere long their hopes were once more doomed to disappointment.

It shortly became known that the Cossack's visit was connected with the escape of one of the Poles. You must understand they have more liberty granted them than the exiles of 1825, being allowed an absence of three days from the town they reside in. He not having reported himself in the village where he had gone on a visit, enquiries had been instituted, and his flight discovered. He had by subterfuge possessed himself of the passport of a Mischanin, that is to say, a trader a little above the peasant, and gone off with it. This young Pole, with whom we are acquainted, having frequently met him at the Troubitskoy's, had without doubt matured his plans some time previously, and now that all chance of pardon from the emperor had vanished, he had put his scheme into execution.

Cossacks were despatched in every direction, but without much hope of capturing him. The next intelligence that came was, that he had been stopped on the road by the people connected with the post, and was now a prisoner in Omsk. This was bad news to his countrymen and companions, he being a young man not more than twenty-eight years of age, and of noble extraction. All declared that had they been rash enough to have attempted an escape, they would have provided themselves with the means of self-destruction, and would never have been taken alive; as his punishment in the

first place must be public flagellation in the town from whence he had fled, and then banishment to the mines for life, with no hope of release.

His Russian friends, the exiles, all condemned him; and said, had he made a confidant of any one of them, they would have dissuaded him from making the attempt, but he never in any way even hinted at his design. Those who were but slightly acquainted with him were unable to divine whence he could have procured the money to enable him to travel: but you must understand he is a great gambler, and latterly had been very successful. His capture was brought about by a quarrel with one of the yemstchicks about *ten kopeeks* silver, which he declared they wanted to overcharge him. This dispute led to the examination of who and what he was; and his appearance not corresponding with his passport, which, as I said, was that of a man in rank a trifle above the peasant, whereas he was travelling in a handsome equipage, and with the appearance of a nobleman, they took him prisoner, and sent him under an escort to Omsk.

Days passed, and his arrival was hourly looked for, when the tidings reached here that he had escaped one night from the prison where he was confined. At first, everyone believed it was a false report; but it proved to be quite true that he had eluded the grasp of his captors. It is presumed he has made his way to the Kirghis steppe; and if he is taken prisoner by the Kirghis he will be worse off than in Irkoutsk; he may then bid adieu to freedom for ever, for he will either be sold as a slave, or treated like a Russian we saw in the

steppe who had been made prisoner by the Kirghis many years since. This man they required for a cow-herd, so they inserted a horsehair into his heel, which lamed him for life, and they took good care that he should never get hold of a horse. I feel very sorry for the fate of the young Pole; it was foolish of him to do such a thing, as there was every chance of his liberation, his crime differing from that of the Russians, being merely a defence of his country. We are constantly hearing of one or another being sent back to the borders of their native land, which is really equivalent to pardon.

Speaking of the exiles, I may as well tell you what I heard of one; but the incident took place some years back. He was a German who had been joined by his wife. They lived near a village, and at the back of their house ran a river, in which this gentleman often occupied himself in fishing. As his wife's time drew near, it was observed that he appeared extremely dejected and more depressed than usual; and on the day of her confinement he left home, as it was supposed, to go and fish. A neighbour from the village had kindly offered her assistance to the wife, and likewise prepared food for the family: but the exile did not return to his dinner; and, as it had often been remarked what an extremely kind and attentive husband he was, his protracted absence caused some little uneasiness. The neighbour was obliged to go home to see after her family, but promised to return; she did so, and finding the husband still absent, proposed passing the night with the wife.

The following morning bringing no tidings of him, notice was given to the authorities, who immediately instituted a search, fearing he was making an attempt to escape. Cossacks were despatched in various directions; and those who went by the river discovered at no great distance from his home the poor man's clothing lying on the banks of the stream. Fancying this might be a ruse to lead them to believe that he had drowned himself, they were more active than ever in search of him; scouring the country in every direction, but without success. At last they resolved to drag the river, presuming it just possible that he might have made away with himself; but his body was nowhere discovered, and after some weeks the search was relinquished. The wife appeared to be much afflicted, and, after a certain lapse of time, asked for permission to return to her native land, a favour usually granted after the death of the exile; during his lifetime those ladies who have voluntarily expatriated themselves are not permitted to go back. Her wish was acceded to, and, as soon as proper arrangements could be made, she was to depart. A pavoska was provided, and a gendarme to accompany her, and see her in safety across the frontier. Many months elapsed before the necessary papers were drawn up. When all was ready, she prepared herself for her solitary journey, and the sympathising peasantry came to take leave of her and wish her prosperity. The road was long and tedious. At length her ears were gladdened by the intelligence that she had but one more station to go, when she would be beyond the power of Russia; and her joy appeared to be very great. About

the middle of the station the yemstchick had to descend from his seat to do something to the horses, when the gendarme was rather startled by hearing some one speaking in an under tone. His suspicions were suddenly aroused, and he came to the determination to search the equipage before crossing the frontier. This he did in spite of all expostulations, when he discovered at the bottom of the carriage the poor woman's husband. To describe her despair, or even his, they say, is impossible; they were both so utterly prostrate. One half-hour more, and they would have been free.

It appeared it had been a well-considered plan. He had placed his clothing on the banks of the river, and at night, during the absence of the peasant woman, he had entered his dwelling unperceived, and was concealed by his wife between the bed and the mattress, where he lay hidden so many months. Search had been made in the house for him, but no one approached her bed. It had required great tact and skill to get him into the pavoska; which however was done without raising the slightest suspicion. They had been so far successful, and were so elated at the idea of being free, that they in a measure forgot their prudence. It was a pity, after undergoing so much torture, and on the very threshold of deliverance. When taken out, the poor fellow was fearfully emaciated, and quite unable to stand.

I am sorry to say the Zarines have been obliged to quit Irkoutsk, on account of Mr. Zarine being in ill health. Although our stay will not be long, still we feel their loss; however, I must say they are succeeded

by a very amiable German family, whose only fault in the eyes of the Irkoutsk ladies is a desire on the part of the governor to curtail their lavish expenditure on dress. He devised a scheme which he believed would answer admirably, and that was, instead of having balls at the assembly-rooms once a month, to have meetings there once a fortnight, to which they should come with their knitting and sewing. The band was to play, when the fingers of the elder ladies and the feet of the younger would dance to its music, thus combining utility with amusement, and securing an immense gain to the pockets of the married gentlemen. All declared they would go, and go they did; but at the second meeting very few went, and at the third not half a dozen: so he has been obliged to relinquish his pet project, the ladies unanimously declaring that it is more amusing to have their private friends at their own homes. So the dress reform has fallen to the ground. General Mouravioff's reform met with the same fate. His was not in dress, but in wine; he wished them to drink only the wine of the country, namely, Nalifka, and he set the example by always taking it himself; but it was useless, no one chose to fall in with his views.

I quite agree that a reform is necessary in this respect, and particularly amongst the dignitaries of the Church. On the Emperor's name-day a great dinner was given by General Mouravioff to all the officers in the town, besides his private friends, but no ladies were present. Alatau and myself were invited, with two other ladies, to dine with Mme. Mouravioff, so we betook ourselves to the gallery, thinking to amuse the child by hearing

the music and seeing the healths drank; when we ourselves were highly amused at seeing, when dinner was concluded, the great dignitary of the Church led out: so it is not surprising that the General advocates reform so strongly.

It is our intention to visit Kiachta, and I do not expect to write to you again before our return from the town of Pigtails. We are going for the fête called the White Month; but, on account of the mourning, there will not be such grand doings as usual. However, I will tell you all I see.

CHAPTER XV.

Journey to Kiachta—The Baikal—A Chinese Dinner—Shopping at Maimatchin—Method of making Tea—Resemblance of the Russians and Chinese in some National Customs—A Day at Selenginsk—Preparations to receive an English Visitor—The Theatre—The Gold-seekers and the Peasantry—Bribery and Peculation—Sleeping on Horseback—The little Traveller in the Snow—The Mayor and his Hospitality.

Irkoutsk, March 1852.

On our return from Kiachta, I found your letter stating that the box containing colours, paper, &c., had been sent off months since; this causes us great uneasiness, we think of it day and night. The governor has received his things, which started at the same time as ours; and, if our boxes arrive in the same state as his, I do not know what Mr. Atkinson will do. One of their cases, containing beautiful fine linen from Holland, was stolen on the road, and a case, perfectly similar, filled with snow and rubbish, to make it of the same weight, substituted. It was very foolishly insured for only two hundred silver roubles, whereas they say a thousand would not pay for the linen alone. Mme. Venselt says she could not procure it in Petersburg for anything like that money; and, besides, the case was filled up with various things, which she does not now remember. The loss is a very sad one for them, and I

am exceedingly sorry, as I know what my feelings would be under the circumstances. The governor told me that our boxes were coming under his protection; but that does not appear to be any safeguard, for I presume, if he could have saved those of anyone they would have been his own.

However, I will leave disagreeable subjects, and tell you of our visit to Kiachta. We started in the beginning of February, and it was a visit of pleasure. I took one of my servants with me, that I might be quite at my ease with regard to sight-seeing and visiting, and besides she is a capital lady's maid, and yet is only cook; she is so much cleverer than the maid I have, that I took her in preference, and I assure you Vara is charmed. She is the same servant I had all last winter. During my absence in summer, she would not take another situation, but worked in the fields till our return. She is the best servant I ever had, though I received a most horrible character of her from our landlady, in spite of which I tried her, and have never had reason to regret doing so. The Princess Troubitskoi mentioned to me the difficulties I should find in procuring one, and thinks I am very fortunate in having secured Vara.

We started about two o'clock in the morning, so that we might reach the Baikal, and cross by daylight, as it is better than crossing in the night. It is fifty-five versts from one side to the other, which we accomplished in four hours. Formerly there was a station midway, but the ice breaking up suddenly some years back, the men, women, children, horses, and everything,

were swept away; it was a frightful disaster. They are now no longer permitted to erect a station during the winter months, therefore one set of horses performs the journey across. It was a bitter morning when we started on the Baikal, a keen wind was blowing, and the thermometer stood at 43° Reaumur. Fortunately, we had a comfortable warm sledge, which General Mouravioff had kindly lent us; notwithstanding which, and also being well wrapped up in furs, I had a difficulty in keeping myself from freezing. The servant had often to rub my feet to stimulate the circulation; but Alatau threw off his furs, he was so warm he said, and sat for awhile with his arms naked. The poor horses were bleeding at the nose, and the yemstchick was frequently obliged to rub them with snow, and he himself, poor man, had to run at times by the horses, to keep himself from freezing. These men, from the effects of the frost, often have their faces as though they had been scalded or burnt. A little care would prevent their being in such a state; it is merely to take snow and rub the frozen part with it before entering a warm room. How much pleasanter this journey would have been in summer! Now the aspect is quite changed, nothing presents itself but one dreary snow-white waste, as far as the eye can reach. Still it was curious to see our old friend the Baikal with its waves of ice, apparently frozen as they were rising high; but the road over which we travelled was as smooth as glass.

The scenery on the river Selenga, by which we journeyed, is very picturesque and beautiful; and then

the trees were clothed with hoar frost sparkling like diamonds and rubies; and as the sun rose the air was filled with glittering particles, having the appearance of the minutest floating diamonds, tinged with gold when looking towards the sun. On our arrival at Troitska, four versts from Kiachta, we found the ground completely clear of snow; it never lies there, the wind carrying it away, so that sledges are very uncommon in the town, and we found great difficulty in making our way to the Director of the Customs, to whom we presented our letters of introduction. Though perfect strangers, he invited us to his house, where we were treated in a most hospitable manner.

Mme. Fedorovitch did all in her power to render my sojourn agreeable. The whole of our time was spent in visiting and dinner-parties, and occasionally, with the Chinese also. The director sent to announce our visit to the sargoochâe or governor, and a hearty welcome we met with. One day we dined with him, and another we supped. To describe the edibles is impossible, for I have no conception of what we ate, and the number of dishes was countless. When I say dishes, you must understand they were no larger than saucers, and occupied the whole centre of the table. Plates were set round for every guest, also the size of saucers; our napkins were pieces of fine paper. For the Chinese, chopsticks were placed, but for our party small steel forks, no knives being required: but we asked for chopsticks in preference, the forks being perfectly rusty from the vinegar, which is used with every kind of food; that is to say, each person pours a little into his or her

plate, and then the viands are dipped into it, and very nice I found it. Our tablecloth was of a flaming red, but everything placed on the table was very clean and nice, and arranged with the greatest precision and order. The first course consisted of about twenty dishes, all placed on at once, and all boiled. Mr. Atkinson partook of every one, but I had some fear, and only tasted those I thought looked edible: ideas of young dogs and cats were floating through my imagination. The second consisted of the same viands as the boiled, but stewed; the third was roast; and the fourth soup, brought on in basins like slop-basins, and from these the guests poured some into their saucers and drank. I tasted of several, and found them delicious.

I took Alatau with me to this dinner, and whilst we were at table a Chinaman took care of him; but before our meal was concluded the sargoochàe politely excused himself, and went to have a game with the child; and there they were, rolling together on the sofa, he quite as delighted as the boy. Dinner ended, we joined the party on the sofa. Arm-chairs were placed round a small table, on which were set dried fruits and cakes. Chinese spirit was presented, the very odour of which was abominable. To satisfy the ladies, it was removed, and tea given instead; but, to my taste, that which I found in the Russian merchants' houses was far finer. The Chinese merchants put the tea into a somervar, and literally boil it; and the Tartars have the same practice. The decoction to me was horrible. In some places they put a little tea into the cup, and pour boiling water over, covering it with the saucer like

a lid. What troubled me was the quantity I was obliged to consume.

Another day we visited the shops, where I found everything very clean, and in the greatest order. I was surprised to hear the Russians call them dirty. It is true, the floors are not washed, no women being allowed in Maimatchin, but every place was well swept, and not a particle of dust anywhere. In the shops there is no display of goods; these are closely and carefully kept in closets at one side of the room, and on the opposite side is a long bench, reminding me of a ship's locker, on which are placed cushions and silk coverlets; in fact, it is a sleeping-apartment. Before unfolding the articles for sale, great care is taken to remove every atom of dust from the tables.

As you wished me to select you a piece of Kanfa or Chinese satin, I looked at several, but, not finding any nearly so good as some I saw in the steppe, I did not purchase. I found granitoor of every colour, but extremely dear, fifty silver roubles the piece; it is certainly beautiful, and, should you wish me to procure any, let me know by return of post, addressed to Barnaoul, whither I can have anything I wish forwarded.

I dare say you expect me to tell you something of the town of Maimatchin; and what can I say about it? Why, only that the houses are small and of one story, altogether reminding me of dolls' houses; and the streets extremely narrow, so that we left our droshky at the gate of the town. In the evening the place presented quite a pretty appearance; at every house flags and coloured lanterns were suspended, and stretched

across the streets from house to house were strings with lanterns hanging from them; in fact, the illuminations reminded one of a little fairy land.

Our time, unfortunately, for visiting Maimatchin was badly chosen; for this year, the court being in mourning, there is no performance in the theatres, nor the usual amount of buffoonery which generally takes place at this season; all of which would have been interesting to see. We had the permission of the sargoochàe to visit the town at night; an order not always granted, for at sunset the gates are closed, and neither egress nor ingress is permitted. We had to wait some time at the gates, whilst the ponderous key was obtained. I do not say I felt exactly comfortable at being locked in, although our hosts were most amiable, and willing to show us everything that was to be seen. I remarked here a custom quite common amongst the Russians, viz. the wearing of a ring on the thumb; indeed the great similarity between these two nations has often struck me. Another thing they do is to play with two small agate balls in one hand, passing one round the other without coming in contact. It is generally when lost in thought that they do this most, and the touching of the balls recalls them to a sense of what is passing around them. Sometimes they have walnuts, and these descend from one generation to the other. I have two which were presented to me, and which, from constant twirling in the fingers, are quite polished, and look like pieces of beautifully-carved wood. Now the Russians do much the same thing with balls of bread.

Again I was reminded of a resemblance in the two people when I saw the tea made. In this process the Russians in Kiachta first rinse the dry tea by pouring boiling water on it, twirling the pot round, and pouring the water off immediately; then fresh water is poured over, and allowed to stand. I enquired the reason, and learned that, during the process of drying the leaves, spirit is spirted over them from the mouth. Now the Russians sprinkle their linen after the same fashion. From a tumbler they take a mouthful of water, and, holding the piece of linen before them, spirt it over; coming from the mouth, it is exactly like spray. I have often tried to imitate them, but could never succeed; not that I approve of the fashion.

On our return we spent a day, according to promise, at Selenginsk with the family of Bestoujeff, with whom I was perfectly charmed. It consists of two brothers, exiles of 1825, and three sisters, who joined them some years back; the eldest of them holds the position of major domo, and she reminded me exceedingly of Dickens's Betsy Trotwood. Her whole happiness is centred in her family, treating them all as children; indeed, she calls the two younger sisters (twins) the children. After breakfast the gentlemen started off together, but Betsy took possession of me, and walked me off to see her domestic arangements; afterwards we visited the cow-house, the fowl-yard, the stables, and coach-house. The younger brother occupies himself in coach-building, and she seemed very proud of his work. 'And now,' she said, 'I want him to marry; I wish you would give him a little advice on the subject.' We next started off to

inspect the ice-cellar, which she has made into a dairy as well, that is to say, she has had a room made adjoining the ice-cellar, so as to have the milk perfectly cool. Just as we were on the point of descending, the elder brother and my husband walked into the courtyard, when the former exclaimed, 'Why, you will tire Mrs. Atkinson to death, and besides, what is there interesting in your ice-cellar?' I replied, 'I was pleased and delighted at seeing these places.' Betsy was charmed, and in triumph exclaimed, 'I was sure I was not mistaken in your character.'

After this promenade, she led me into her private apartment; and, seating me in a comfortable chair, gave me the history of their arrival. It appears the mother made many applications to the emperor for permission to join her sons; sometimes she was led to believe her prayer would be granted, and then something would intervene, dashing her hopes to the ground. At length an order was received according permission. They immediately wrote the glad tidings to the exiles, and set about their preparations. Disposing of their house, furniture, horses, and carriages, and bidding adieu to their friends, they started for Moscow; but on their arrival there, they found an oukaze waiting for them, countermanding their departure, without giving any reasons for so doing. The sorrow of the poor mother was very great, and the shock made her in a sad state. Again she addressed the emperor, and prayed to be allowed to depart; but, after weary waiting, the longing desire to see her beloved sons preyed so much on the old lady, that she died just as the final order for their

departure was received. Relating this to me she wept very much, saying, 'I always thought it such a cruel act to tantalize my poor old mother as they did.' Who can tell? perhaps it was meant for a kind act: for the hardships she would have to undergo were described to her, and she was told that it would be impossible to grant her any favours. Her reply was that she was willing to endure all, if she might be allowed to rejoin her sons.

Dinner being announced, we went to table. After dinner she set me on a sofa, with orders to repose myself, whilst she went to see after the 'children,' and send them to lie down, as they were not very strong. The children were bordering on fifty. On her return, her elder brother Nicholai* and my husband had just entered the room. As they stood talking together, *Betsy* looked at them from time to time; at length she said, in her peculiar blunt way, 'Do just look at those two faces, did you ever see anything more alike? you have no conception how I love those two faces.' One more thoroughly devoted to another I never beheld; it was perfect adoration for her favourite brother. And what she said was true enough; they were the image of each

* Nicholai Bestoujeff visited Irkoutsk in the winter after our departure, to see his old companions in exile. Returning, a poor woman begged of him to take her to Selenginsk, whither she was proceeding to join her husband; she said she would sit on the box with the coachman. He most cordially granted her prayer; but the weather being very severe, and room for only one inside his carriage, he, with his usual goodness of heart, bade her get in, and he himself rode out. Unfortunately, his kind action proved fatal to him, for he caught cold, which settled on his lungs, bringing on inflammation, from which he died.

other in height also, the only difference being that her brother was a trifle stouter.

A young man, an officer, who is in some way connected with the barrier of Irkoutsk, called upon us to say, they had had notice that an Englishman was coming to Irkoutsk on his way to Kamschatka, a certain Lieutenant Pimm, and when he arrived they wished to know from us what was to be done with him. Although perfectly happy and most kindly received by everybody, still the very name of an Englishman made the heart beat more rapidly. My husband and I conferred together for awhile, and concluded to invite him to stay at our house; and, if he did not like it, he might seek for a lodging for himself. We told the officer to conduct him to us. He thanked us, and said Lieutenant Pimm would be with us the same week.

I immediately set to work to prepare a room for him, giving up to his service a small cabinet I have. The first time we had to leave home it was rather perplexing to know how to manage; for we presumed he could not speak Russian, and, when taken to our house, would be at a loss. Mr. Atkinson therefore left a note for him, stating where we were, and enclosed the keys so that he might prepare himself tea, saying that I had ordered the servants to give the somervar. This farce had to be gone through each time we went out. When we were about starting for Kiachta we were in a great difficulty, and, had we been quite sure he would arrive, we should have abandoned our trip. To this hour we have been on the continued look-out for him, but he has not appeared.

I was very glad we left Irkoutsk for Kiachta before the Maslinitz, for I am really wearied with the number of balls: it is not the ball itself, so much as the preparation; and as I have my young friends Karsakoff and Bibikoff, they both feel their honour at stake if I am not well dressed. One day I was preparing a dress to go to a ball, which I had worn before, when Bibikoff entered, and made such a fuss about it, that I was forced to go and buy a new one, Mr. Atkinson encouraging their vagaries. Scarcely a week passes without a ball or an evening party. Then plays are got up, a company of actors having been invited from Omsk. (In Barnaoul it is very pretty, as they are all amateur performers.) As a crowning point there is an innovation, in the shape of masquerades. What will they have next? Plays they have had in former years, masquerades never.

On the opening play this season, one of the actors went round to the inhabitants to solicit their patronage: we took a box, as it was the first time, and my son made his *début* amongst the audience of a theatre. We took him, thinking he would be gratified listening to the music; nor were we disappointed, he was in ecstasies, and applauded as loudly as he could. Whether I did right or wrong in taking him is a question, for his appearance has set a fashion; he was the only child in the theatre; but next time I went it was crowded with children. I dare say you imagine I am vain about my boy; if I am, you must not blame me, others would make me so, and his father would persuade me that I am; but it is not so. I have declared I will never

mention him in any of my future letters; how I shall keep my word time alone will prove.

Speaking of children one day, the general told us that on his journey to Kamschatka he stopped at a peasant's cottage, and whilst there the wife was confined of three children at a birth; they were healthy and doing well, so he presented the mother with a hundred silver roubles, saying that each time she had that number he would present her with a like sum, if she would only let him know. He says Siberia wants population! I suppose every peasant would be pleased to present her lord with a similar number.

There has been a grand disturbance in the town. You will perhaps remember I told you Mr. Atkinson went to the river Hook to paint a waterfall for a gentleman living here. He is a gold-seeker, and besides enormously wealthy, having married the niece of the rich Kouznitzoff: his priesk is somewhere near the Lena. Wishing to make fresh explorations, he set fire to the forest around, thus laying waste an immense extent of wood, and of course destroying and driving the animals away. The Yakouts living in the vicinity were entirely deprived of the means of subsistence by this conflagration, as in this wood they were accustomed to hunt the sable and other animals. The head men amongst the tribe applied to Zanadvoroff for some remuneration, he having deprived them of their livelihood; but he refused to comply with their request, and treated the poor fellows with great contempt. After numerous rebuffs, they wrote a report to the Governor-

general, representing their grievances, but through bribery it was suppressed.

Finding nothing was done in the affair, an old man, the head of the tribe, believing that could their case be brought before the general they would obtain justice, determined upon going to Irkoutsk himself. He started on foot, walking the whole distance. After many a weary day's march, he at length arrived in the capital of Eastern Siberia; and went immediately to the Ispravonick, but was unable to get any redress. One day an officer passing near the Ispravonick's, the old man became emboldened, and, addressing him, asked if he could direct him how to proceed; the gentleman put many questions to him, and, learning all the particulars, bade him follow, as he was on his way to the general. Leaving the peasant outside, and finding the general alone, he acquainted him with the whole affair. The Yakout was ordered in and examined; he repeated his story; and directions were given that he should be taken care of, lodged, and fed. The general then despatched a messenger for the Ispravonick, and on his arrival asked him why this case had not been brought under his notice. The Ispravonick, quite confounded, stammered forth some lame excuses, such as they had not had time to see into the affair. The general was in a great rage, demanding what he meant by saying there had not been time, when more than a year had elapsed. The thing was plain to every one, bribery had been at work. Officers were sent off immediately to enquire into the matter, and to bring back a true and faithful account.

One morning, as Mr. Atkinson was sitting with

Zanadvoroff (the transgressor in this affair), a gendarme officer arrived, — you must understand these officers form part of the society in Irkoutsk. He was exceedingly amiable to all, and Mr. Atkinson bade them adieu, just as he and Zanadvoroff were excusing themselves on business. On coming home, he told me what had occurred, saying he was convinced that Zanadvoroff was Focht's prisoner: which was true. However, it appears, that, after he was examined, he made a statement to some one to the effect that he had been ill treated, he having given the general two thousand roubles to settle the matter. This coming to the ears of the latter, he forthwith despatched Cossacks to desire every officer in Irkoutsk to attend on a certain day and hour at his residence. All went in full uniform, but none knew for what reason they had been convoked. When they were assembled, the general, arrayed likewise in full uniform and with all his decorations on him, marched into the room; Zanadvoroff and Focht being there also. Saluting all, he took his seat, and in a commanding tone demanded of Zanadvoroff if it was true that he had declared that he (the general) had received two thousand roubles. He answered, 'Yes! I have said so, and it is quite true.' The general almost bounded from his seat. He had called all his officers together, that they might hear this man disavow the charge he had brought against him; and, instead of doing so, he boldly asserted that he had given the money, and called upon Moltchanoff, the private secretary (who I told you in a former letter had married the young Princess Volkonsky), to confirm what he had said,

for it was to him he had paid it — two thousand for the general, and a thousand for himself. He was not present, so a mounted Cossack was sent off immediately to bring him. When he arrived, he denied having received the money; but Zanadvoroff stood firm to his story.

The case is now being entered into; meanwhile, the general has despatched a courier to Petersburg stating the whole affair, and it is presumed the trial will take place there, as he does not desire the dispute to be decided here. No one believes him to be guilty; but Moltchanoff, they are persuaded, has pocketed the three thousand roubles, leading this man to believe the general had received it. What short-sighted mortals we are! Had Zanadvoroff paid these poor peasants about five hundred roubles, he might have settled the whole business, whereas now it will cost him not only his fortune, but his liberty. This subject has been the constant theme of conversation; and such things as these give a little variety to their otherwise monotonous life.

I find the Troubitskois have abandoned the idea of quitting Irkoutsk and exile, for they have made great alterations in their house, having added more rooms to it: the reason is, the vast change in their circumstances caused by the death of the Countess Laval, mother to the princess; I understand that previously their means were very straitened, as the husband's property had been confiscated. The building was not quite completed, when one of the daughters married—a union that gave great satisfaction, the bridegroom being

the son of Davidoff, one of the exiles, but not born in Siberia. It is said that marriages, like fevers, are contagious. The wedding was scarcely concluded when the eldest daughter was engaged to the Governor of Kiachta, and the third is also demanded in marriage. This result is very different from what a Siberian in Barnaoul would expect if he added rooms to his old house. A gentleman there consulted Mr. Atkinson concerning some alterations he desired to make. He wished for more space; his ball-rooms were good, but he wanted tea and supper-rooms: if anything could be devised without levelling the house, he should be glad; but to the proposal of adding rooms, he objected, and we found out that he was superstitious enough to believe that such an act would end in death to one of the family. The matter terminated by his deciding that rooms should be built a short distance from the house, and joined to it by a passage, as that would never be noticed. The idea has often amused us since. In Irkoutsk the alteration has ended in marriages, not deaths.

I was talking one day with Prince Troubitskoi about your not giving me credit for sleeping on horseback: you say 'travellers' stories are marvellous,' but he quite believes me; for he tells me, that during the war, when Napoleon took Moscow, he once slept half an hour on horseback. In the very hot weather I have sometimes been so overpowered by the heat that I feared I might drop off to sleep and let the child fall. I am better pleased now that he is able to sit a horse himself; but I still have my fears about his falling from

the pavoska. I am very particular about its being buttoned up (that is to say, the apron) at night. Speaking on this subject with Mr. Taskin, he told me that after the death of his wife, he was on his road from Nertchinsk to Irkoutsk, with his three children. Waking up in the middle of a station, he felt about to see if all the children were right, and could find but two: he stopped the pavóska, search was made, but the child was gone! In an agony of mind he bid them take a horse out of harness: a Cossack mounted him, for he was himself in such a state he could not go. About a verst away the little creature was found in the middle of the road, fast asleep on the snow, for it was in winter; this makes me more anxious than before.

A most hospitable and amiable family here I have not yet mentioned, and still scarcely a Sunday passes but we dine with them; he is a merchant, and, besides, mayor of the town, we have given him the honourable appellation of 'lord mayor.' He is a very clever man, and, being a merchant, has had every opportunity of collecting valuable Chinese ornaments; he has also a splendid library, besides extensive hot-houses. He spends enormous sums of money in collecting plants, and (would you credit it?) he understands nothing about them! The only benefit he derives from his large outlay is to walk through his hot-houses after dinner, and smoke his cigar. Not one of the family has any real love for flowers. His eldest daughter is a clever girl, but with no taste for horticulture; she is, however, an excellent musician, and many a pleasant hour do we spend in hearing her play. The wife is no lover of

flowers; indeed I do not know what she is a lover of: she belongs to the old school of Siberian wives, that is, she is literally, an automaton, seldom seen by visitors, and never visiting. I believe the old lady talks to me more than she does to anyone, and her confidence in me is great. This being the first winter her daughter mixes in society, she has begged of me to take charge of her.

Would you like to know how these hot-houses are managed? The mayor has a friend, a counsellor, who undertakes the whole arrangement, and I can assure you he does it well. The one likes to have the shrubs and plants from vanity, and, having a well-stocked purse, is able to gratify it; the other loves them for themselves, and, not having the pecuniary means of gratifying his passion, is able to do so by serving a friend, and thus they are mutually satisfied. But it is quite amusing to see the 'lord mayor' asking permission to cut his own flowers, or even to gather a strawberry.

CHAPTER XVI.

Deficiencies of the Postal Service—The Bielouka—Fearful Storm—Pic-nics in Siberia—Ill-assorted Marriages—Presentiment and Discovery of a Murder.

Barnaoul, September 1852.

I HAVE just received your letter dated July; it has been long on the road, and it appears to me that mine have not all reached you. I do not understand how it is, there is evidently something wrong somewhere; the fault does not lie with us, for Mr. Atkinson himself delivered them into the hands of my friend the post-master. I was very particular in gaining the good-will of this important personage whilst in Irkoutsk, and succeeded so well, that every case of mine that arrives I receive without the slightest delay, which fact causes a degree of jealousy amongst some of the good folks of Irkoutsk. My friend said one day to me, 'I can pick your box out from a thousand, by the substantial make of it.' I am very glad you have complied with my request in this matter, particularly this last season, as at the breaking up of the rivers, very often the post carriage has been quite immersed in the water. I saw some dresses the Princess Troubitskoi had received, so utterly ruined that there was no possibility of wearing them: and a young lady about to be married had the principal part

of her trousseau sent from Petersburg in a case so slight that it was smashed to atoms, and half the articles were either lost or stolen. What were saved were entirely useless; so much so, that the post-master sent to her to say a box had arrived, and would she call and see it? She went, but never took the things away; and she would get no redress, the post being only answerable if the case is lost, not if it is damaged. You cannot wonder at their being broken, when the enormous distance is taken into account, and their removal to a different carriage at every station, which is effected by flinging them from one vehicle to the other, utterly regardless of any injury they might sustain. I have tried to convince the ladies, but with no result, how much wiser it would be to expend a little more on the post by the extra weight in the box, and receive everything in good order. The different articles sent to me look as though they had just left the magazine, thanks to the thickness of the packing cases.

We are now living in the house of a friend, overlooking the Ob, which at this season is but little larger than the Neva, although we have crossed it when it was twelve versts broad, that is, when the snow was melting in the mountains in June. You cannot conceive what a hearty welcome we met with from all our old friends; but the joy of meeting was to me mingled with a little sadness, for I now feel that when I bid farewell this time, it will be for ever. Formerly, on saying adieu, it was with the hope of meeting again; now each step we take is a farewell to places and persons whom we have not only learned to respect, but to love; to me it is the

great drawback from staying long in one place; at least, long enough to form friendships, which we have done, and in Barnaoul particularly.

I have been induced, through the very urgent entreaties of our friends, to allow my husband to go alone this summer to ascend the Bielouka. I consented the more readily, as I had visited the regions round about before; and, besides, Colonel Sokolovsky had intended joining him in this excursion. He was prevented by his departure for Petersburg, which did not take place till the 8th of August, and Mr. Atkinson having remained to see him off, the season was far advanced. Many of our friends thought it too late, as the winter begins in the high regions so early; but he did not seem inclined to defer his journey till another season. He now tells me he regrets much that I did not go, as I have missed some fine scenery; and besides, he says, he missed his companion. He also missed the little arrangements I was able to make for our comfort; I always tried to do this, though scarcely able, at times, to move from fatigue.

One stormy night he took up his abode under some larch trees, and it is only when the rain is exceedingly heavy that it penetrates them. Here he saw a storm more terrible, he believes, than any we had ever experienced. He had not slept more than two hours, when he was awakened by a loud clap of thunder, and he sat up. 'The clouds, he says, appeared hanging on the tops of the trees, and the thunder reverberated among the mountain in sawful grandeur; he counted the seconds between each flash and report, and found

the storm was fast approaching. When he could count only six the bellowing was frightful, every flash came nearer; it was soon directly over him, and the lightning and report were simultaneous. It was as if the lightning came from the tops of the trees; the very ground appeared to shake with the thunder; and this continued the whole night.

All in Barnaoul had spoken of the terrors of a journey to the Bielouka, but in his letter to me he says: 'It is only imaginary, and you have gone over places ten times more difficult. The only thing to be said is, the snow is unpleasant; but the fording of the rivers and the ascent of the mountains we have done over and over again.' Will you believe me? I wept to think that I had, against my own inclination, yielded to the advice not to go with him; that storm, as he now describes it to me, I would have given some years of my existence to have witnessed. I often wish I had the wings of a bird, or the wand of a fairy.

Our progress to Barnaoul was very slow, there were so many places to stop at to bid farewell. There was Nijni Oudinsk, Kansk, Krasnoiarsk, and then Solaier, at each of which places we had to stop a day or two; but at the latter a couple of weeks. Independently of the final farewell, Mr. Atkinson desired to make some sketches in the neighbourhood. Here they are determined our stay shall be agreeable. We make frequent excursions into the surrounding country, and there is no place equal to Siberia for a pic-nic; we can settle down on any spot we choose, and ramble about at will. Each lady takes it in turn to act the hostess, and for-

ward servants with the necessary supplies to the place of encampment. These assemblies are the most joyous you can possibly conceive. The ladies start first with the children; then follow the gentlemen, when all kinds of games are played, in which the latter, old and young, join in right good earnest; casting all cares to the winds, they become children for the time, jumping, leaping, running, and dancing.

Since we last visited Barnaoul Hymen has been busy. One couple, both young, but so unsuited, have been joined together in matrimony, having been each fascinated with the dancing of the other. I understand that at home they are the most wretched beings in existence, and are ever seeking for diversion abroad. What an idea they must have of wedded life! The next couple is made up of a young lady of two and twenty, and a bridegroom of seventy. There is one thing to be said in favour of this last marriage, that it serves to divert our evenings in society. The last winter we spent here, he wooed the Terpsichorean muse in the company of two ladies; his present wife and another young lady only seventeen. However, when we were in Irkoutsk, the news reached us, that the Marquis had broached the subject of marriage to General A., who most politely declined the honour intended for his daughter; the lover being nearly thirty years his senior. The Marquis, it is stated, rushed off in despair, and before the matter was talked about, to the father of the other young lady, and was accepted. Even in Irkoutsk it added to our merriment. The Princess Troubitskoi told me she gave him great offence when he

was there some few years back; so much so, that he never called to see her, or even deigned to do more than bow to her when he met her in society, although he had sought her acquaintance with some earnestness. The offence was, her expressing her surprise at his being able to dance so well at his age; 'quite as well as when I saw you,' she said, 'dancing at a ball at my mother's; but I was then a very little girl, and you were a young man, so I do not suppose you remember me.' Now there is another gentleman, a general in Tomsk, of the same age as the Marquis, who has also taken unto himself a wife; but he has married in reason, the lady is about forty: no one even dreams of mentioning them.

I believe I have forgotten to tell you that when in Krasnoiarsk we called upon the Davidoffs. I told you the son married a Troubitskoi. Knowing one of the exiles acts as a talisman to an introduction to the others. Like all of them, this family is a most amiable one; we found them living in the outskirts of the town. A year before our visit they had been joined by their daughters, whom Mme. Davidoff had left in the care of relations when she went to join her husband; and, singularly enough, we hear one of them has married since we quitted them. When Mr. Davidoff made his appearance after we had been announced, it was with a declaration in Russian of how glad he was to see us and make our acquaintance, ended by an oath, uttered in English; such a one as would have made an Englishman stare in England. Speaking on the subject of their exile, he said: 'It was always a source of regret to me that we were

betrayed by an Englishman: whether we were right or wrong is not the question; but that Englishman pushed himself into our society, feigning to be our friend, whereas he was acting the ignoble part of a spy and a traitor.'

What a storm of hail we had the other day! I never experienced its equal; scarcely a pane of glass was left in any window in the town. We were going to an evening party, and on our way I was surprised to look at the houses as we passed along. At the Strolemans' we found the guests assembled, and also a number of men putting in the panes; at first, I had imagined it was our house alone that had suffered so much damage. The hospital, I was told by those who had passed it, had more than a hundred panes broken. These storms are said to be frequent, and do great damage.

At this soirée, conversation turned upon presentiment; some laughed at the idea, others believed in a prognostication of future events, and I listened to the conversation, as you know it is one of my favourite themes. Each had something to say either for or against. Mme. Stroleman said that last summer she was induced to accompany her husband on one of his tours of inspection, when she took her two little sons with her, thinking the trip would benefit them. They with their nurse were in one carriage, and she and her husband in another. On their return journey an accident happened to the wheels of the carriage in which the boys were travelling, so, taking them into their own, the Colonel bade the yemstchick bring the equipage on as quickly as he could, and they would stop at the first

village. They did so, and going to the best cottage alighted; but no sooner did Mme. Stroleman enter the room than she declared that nothing would induce her to stop. The Colonel represented to her that the repairs would not take very long: as soon as the yemstchick arrived, he would have the matter arranged without delay, and five in a carriage only suitable to hold two was unpleasant. She said it was all very true, but stop there she would not: if they stopped, she was convinced some harm would happen to them; the very air seemed teeming with evil.

There was nothing to be done; so the Colonel was obliged to order the horses, and leave directions that the repairs should be hastened, and the equipage follow them to the station. In due time it arrived, and they continued their journey. Mme. Stroleman said she had a presentiment that if they had stopped there they would have been murdered; the place looked and smelled of murder. The station before they arrived in Barnaoul they were taking tea, when a mounted peasant rode up, and, learning the Colonel was there, said his business was with him. He was required to return, to judge a man who had committed murder. The master of the cottage where they had stopped, and where Mme. Stroleman would not remain, was the culprit. The previous evening a travelling merchant, a pedlar, had put up at his cottage, and he, perceiving the man had money, had murdered him whilst asleep with a topore (a hatchet). This took place only a few hours before their arrival, and the

murdered man was lying under a trap-door in the very room in which they had been sitting.

Fortunately, he had been seen to enter the cottage, and, no one having observed him go away, enquiries were made, when the murderer said he had left early; but to the simple peasantry he had a suspicious look. It seemed strange, also, that the pedlar should have left so suddenly, without disposing of any of his wares; so they began to examine into the affair, and at length discovered what had taken place.

CHAPTER XVII.

New Year's Day in Russia—Festivities in Barnaoul—Chief of the Cossacks—Peculation by Government Officials—A Birthday Ball—Champagne *v.* Vodky—Approaching Departure from Barnaoul.

Barnaoul, January 1853.

THE time is fast drawing nigh for our departure; our friends would not hear of our starting till after Christmas. We have had no end of balls, concerts, and theatricals; more gaiety than usual this year, in honour of the new Natchalnick, Colonel Stroleman having succeeded Colonel Sokolovsky, who has been promoted to the rank of General. There is always a grand ball given by the Natchalnick on new year's eve to the whole town. It is really a pretty and joyous sight, a brilliant assemblage full of mirth, congratulating each other as the bells toll forth the new year. At the moment, which is watched for with the greatest care, the champagne is poured out, and there is a general kissing all round. The new year is a grand festival in Russia—a constant round of visiting. The ladies sit at home on the first day, and receive the visits of the gentlemen, and after that the ladies visit each other.

To return to the ball: it was intended to be very brilliant. The ladies had done their utmost to promote the general effect, by each one having a magnificent

new dress for the occasion: and it was curious to see the post arrive; the number of cases was extraordinary. By the way, whilst I think of it, let me thank you for the trouble you were at in selecting my dress, or rather dresses; the green is very pretty and effective, at night it looks a beautiful blue. The ribbon à la Pompadour is splendid and much admired; I am glad ribbons are again in fashion, I am very fond of them. I wore the white dress for the grand ball; the material is very pretty; again thanks for everything. Well, about the middle of the evening, the brilliancy of the ball was completely clouded by an unlooked-for accident; the lights went out, and left us almost in total darkness. As I told you before, the candles and various other articles come from the fair of Irbit. Now, the Strolemans were unprepared for so large a number of lights as they needed this year, and had therefore to purchase some stearine candles in Barnaoul, which burnt pretty well till about half the candle was used, and then they did not choose to burn any longer, and went right out. A servant came and attempted to light them, but they would not catch, and he then brought the steps to examine into the matter, and found there were no wicks. A few others were procured, but nothing like sufficient to light up the rooms as they ought to have been; they are very large. I quite felt for our host and hostess, for they must have been annoyed, particularly this being their first ball since he has been made Natchalnick. Naturally it was a disappointment to the ladies, the beauty and freshness of their dresses being entirely lost; and it is said such trivial things make up a woman's life.

The last ball I was at I was a little troubled how to arrange for a head-dress: I had never bought one; what on earth should I have done with flowers whilst travelling? In Irkoutsk I managed capitally, as Miss Basnin sent me fresh flowers each time I went out. I was the only one so indulged. Here we cultivated some in our rooms, and I had used the last; what was to be done? I would willingly have gone without, but that could not be. A sudden idea crossed my husband's mind, so I sent to Miss Annossoff for some ivy leaves, when he made me a beautiful wreath interspersed with red berries made from sealing-wax on the heads of pins, it really looked nice.

The ladies begged of me to give them the wreath, when they divided its leaves amongst them, and each one planted her sprig, as a remembrance of my last ball in Barnaoul.

I believe I have not mentioned our meeting here a young man from Kopal, where he had been on government service; from him we gathered a great deal of news of the place, and of our old friends, and all the changes that have taken place since we left. Had any of our old acquaintance known he would have met us, what messages we should have received! This young man made terrible complaints of the dreadful fatigues of the journey, and we learned that, instead of riding on horseback, he had been carried between two horses. When I expressed my surprise, he enquired how I had travelled; and when I said I had ridden, and, moreover, the last summer in the steppe, 123 days successively, he replied, 'I was tired to death in crossing, I wonder you are not dead.'

Among the several officers in Kopal for whom we retained feelings of friendship, was the chief of the Cossacks, a most worthy man. During our sojourn among them, many circumstances occurred which enabled us to form a just estimate of this man's character: the care which he bestowed on those under his charge; his sorrow when he saw his men cut down by sickness, and nothing provided to alleviate their sufferings. Here they had to winter, exposed to all the rigour of the climate; and his own small resources were constantly drawn upon to supply a few comforts to the sick and dying: but, alas! these were small in comparison with their wants.

Late in the autumn the caravans arrived with stores, consisting principally of rye-flour, black croop (a grain much used for food), also oats for the artillery horses. These articles were delivered in Kopal, and placed under the care of the chief of the Cossacks. When the flour was examined, it was found to be of the worst description, and scarcely fit for horses; the grain sent for them was also bad. Ismaeloff objected to receive these stores from the contractors, and sent a report to the proper quarter in Omsk, saying he had rejected the whole of the rye-flour as unfit; he also urged that other supplies should be sent forthwith, or the people would have nothing to subsist on.

To this despatch he received a reply which showed that the contractors had not been inactive, telling him that his conduct had already been complained of, and they were indignant at his rejecting flour of a superior quality to that which they had agreed to supply; also

that the general under whose authority and inspection these stores had been purchased was perfectly satisfied; and suggesting to the commander that he had better attend to his own duties instead of meddling with those of his superiors, whom he had only to obey. From this period his removal and degradation were decided on by those high in office under the Governor-general. Had his despatch reached Prince Gortchakoff, there is no doubt that the real delinquents would have been exposed, and the poor Cossacks would have received wholesome food. Ismaeloff was deemed too dangerous to be left in a position where he could communicate with the prince, and measures were instantly adopted to prevent it.

Up to this period all letters, despatches, and other papers, were delivered to the chief of the Cossacks, when they were sealed up in bags by him, and sent under charge of three Cossacks to Aiagooz, and thence by the Cossack post to Omsk. An order was received from the prince, saying that in future the despatch bags were to be made up by the civil authorities, by whom they would be forwarded under a guard of Cossacks. By this arrangement, every letter or report which the Cossack chief wrote could be examined and suppressed, if necessary. This placed Ismaeloff under the surveillance of the head of the civil department and the officers in Omsk. At length his enemies succeeded in concocting a series of charges against him, which were laid before the Governor-general, by whom the Cossack chief was summoned to Omsk. Knowing that his insidious foes would stop at nothing to effect his ruin, and

that his bare assertions of innocence would have no weight, and to crown all having heard that he was to be made a soldier, he determined that they should not exult over his degradation. Poor fellow! in a fit of despair he placed two cartridges in his mouth, ignited them, and in a moment his spirit was beyond the reach of his persecutors. What became of his wife and son I have never been able to learn.

I have good reason to remember the Cossack post, for I left a box filled with different articles to be forwarded to Aiagooz by it; but on reaching that place no box, nor yet a magnificent pair of horns from a wild sheep shot by my husband, was there to meet us. Months later, on our arrival in Barnaoul, a letter was written to Prince Gortchakoff, begging of him to make enquiries. He immediately replied, saying that, concerning our effects left in Kopal, he hastened to inform us that since our departure the officer who commanded that post had committed suicide; that Baron Vrangle had left for Petersburg, having definitively given up his late occupation; and that these complicated circumstances rendered it rather difficult to obtain information respecting our box, &c.; nevertheless, he would not fail to do all that depended upon himself to serve us, and for this purpose he would write that very day to Colonel Keil (who, by the way, I told you was removed from Bisk to Semipolatinsk, and who we have just now learned is dead), as the only person who could for the moment procure him the best account of the affair. Be assured I gave up all hope of ever seeing it more.

As I wrote to you, we left Barnaoul for Irkoutsk,

but without another word of the unfortunate box. Two years have passed and here we are again; but, alas! nothing has been heard of it. I was determined not to think any more about it, and only hoped that no harm had happened to the other cases, &c., we had left. These Colonel Sokolovsky, who had kindly taken charge of them, forwarded a few days after our arrival. It was a long task to open all; and we had not half done when bedtime arrived. However, in spite of my husband's remonstrances, I was determined to have one box more opened, as I could not conceive what its contents could be; I said I merely wanted a glance: when, can you judge of my astonishment?—it was the lost one. Where had it come from? On rising the following morning, I believed for a second that I had been dreaming; but no, there, safe enough, was the wanderer. I was now all anxiety to see the Colonel. At dinner we met, when I questioned him about the box, and he declared we had left it with him. At length, after much talking, he recollected that an ouradnick had arrived with it from the prince, and that he had placed it together with our other trunks. I was very much pleased to have it; it was like meeting with an old friend who for years had been astray. But, alas! the precious horns were gone; we never found them: we had forgotten to mention them in our letter to the prince, and it was not worth writing about again.

I am quite confident I wrote you the particulars of Alatau's birthday. I remember well giving a long description, knowing all these little matters interest

you. On this, his fourth birthday, he had a grand ball. All our friends, old, young, and middle-aged, came, and right merrily was the evening spent. I was only going to have three musicians, thinking it quite sufficient for my little folks, but Colonel Kavanka sent me the whole band, to my great surprise; indeed, all are so kind to us wanderers. Another amiable action. The house we are inhabiting, as I told you, belongs to a friend who is now located at Zmeinogorsk, so the rooms are not overstocked with furniture. On the occasion of this *grand* ball, finding we should be short of seats in the supper-room, I mentioned it to Mme. Stroleman, who sent immediately to her country-house for a couple of dozen chairs; then she sent me her head cook, he being superior to mine, also her principal waiting-man; indeed, each house one visits there is always the same set of servants, the one borrows of the other for every festival. I believe the great feature of the evening was my Christmas pudding. My fame is spreading; it was just as great a wonder to them as a fine block of Siberian ice would be to you. It makes me sigh when I think I shall shortly quit Siberia, its blocks of ice, its snow-clad mountains, its lovely scenery, and all that is sublime in nature, to return to a town life, which has not the same charms for me. I could almost wish I were a Kirghis, wandering forth like them, under a serene sky, in search of mountain pastures. Happy people! free and unfettered by any customs of so-called civilised life. In those beloved mountains, how many a wild idea has crossed my brain, how many a spot have we fixed upon to be our final resting-place in this world of

care! It was usually under the shade of a tree, and where the mountain rill could be heard, which fancy led me to believe would soothe the spirit to rest.

I do not believe I shall be able to write to you again before leaving this town; but I fancy we shall make some stay in Ekaterinburg; if so, from there you will probably hear from me. The gentlemen are off on a shooting expedition; on their return we generally have plenty of amusing anecdotes. The ladies declare they could buy the birds at one tenth part of the cost from the dealers. It would amuse you to see the quantity of champagne they take with them. There are times when these gentlemen cook in champagne the fish which is caught for them; and this is one of their great delicacies. I must say I have no fancy for it.

Two men, returning from the gold-washing, determined upon buying a bottle of champagne, having a great desire to test the strength of their masters' favourite drink. They argued what its strength must be; considering that a bottle of vodky cost forty kopecks and that was very strong, what must champagne be costing thirteen times as much per bottle? Thus, at the first place they reached where champagne could be bought, they ordered a bottle. It was poured into tumblers, but when they saw it effervescing they became greatly alarmed; still they determined (having spent so much money) to try its power. They considered their masters must have throats of iron to drink anything so strong. A signal was agreed upon, when they were to swallow it off at once; but before doing so they arose, and embracing took a final

farewell. Joining hands, they seized their glasses, and with a desperate resolve emptied them; when they stared at each other in astonishment, exclaiming, 'Nechevo! (it is nothing!)—it is exactly like water;' and concluded that their masters were great simpletons for drinking such rubbish, and paying so much money for it, when they could have a whole bottle of vodky for forty kopecks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ekaterinburg—Passion for Card-playing—Obtaining Recruits for the Army—The Easter Carnival—Pancakes and Bells—Amateur Bell-ringers—Iloutroffsky—A pardoned Exile—The Fair at Irbit.

Ekaterinburg, May 1853.

LAST week only I received your letter, dated February 1853, now three months old. Need I tell you that it was, after so long a silence, a great pleasure, especially coming from you? I fear I am not in the mood to write you a long letter, as my ideas are all chilled by the intense cold weather, which is making us all shiver again, and that, too, just at midsummer. Oh! for Siberia, with its bright sunny sky. The climate is far better than this; there you find a clear and pure atmosphere, but here it is cloudy; rain and snow, with very strong winds, sharp and cutting.

I dare say you think our progress homeward is very slow. On Saturday next we shall start on our last excursion in the Oural mountains; this will be short, and soon ended, after which I hope to reduce the distance between us. I have not told you anything of our journey here. Several of our Barnaoul friends conducted us to the first station, ladies and gentlemen both; here we all partook of refreshment; then in

champagne they wished us a happy and prosperous journey, when we took leave of our kind friends, probably for ever.

We had several zavods to call at, to which we had to turn aside; but though it took us out of our road, we could not think of quitting without bidding adieu to all. The last we visited was the brother of General Sokolovsky. He likewise, with several of his friends, conducted us to the first station from his place. We drove to the Ispravonick's house, where two ladies met us, and embraced me as if I were an old acquaintance.

We had not been long in the house, ere the two ladies vanished to order tea, and the gentlemen sat down to consult nearly the only books they ever read, viz. cards: they had carried them in their pockets for that purpose. Having nothing better to do, I stood by watching the game. The old lady was not long ere she returned to the room; coming close up she touched me, I glanced at her, when she cast her eyes down towards her hand, mine followed, when I perceived she had a pack of cards. Looking once more narrowly into her face, I suddenly recognised my old friend the apothecary's wife from Zmeinogorsk. I could not refrain from a smile, and it would have been amusing to you could you have seen the old lady's face when I remembered her. Her husband had been occupying the position of Ispravonick during the last two years.

I had to follow the good but simple-minded lady into another room. I would gladly have excused myself from doing such a foolish thing as foretelling future events by cards, but the kind creature believed I did

not like to be troubled. I told her, most cheerfully would I lay the cards out twenty times, I was not afraid of trouble. I perceived I should give offence if I said it was nonsense, so went through the ordeal of peeping into futurity. I hope they will not find out I have been dealing in the black art, and burn me for a witch when I return home — *home*! that one little word, how many a recollection does it stir up in one's mind! We have been accustomed to have a new home nightly; but the home of homes is one's birthplace. I often wonder what Alatau's feelings will be when he grows up; what place he will recognise as his home. Most probably, when he becomes a man, Kopal will no longer be a fortress; but his birthplace he will be sure to recognise, from the celebrated spring Tamchiboulac. The state of the weather without reminds me, as I am speaking of Kopal, how different my position is now to what it was there, where we were obliged to hang up quilts, cloaks, and coats, to keep out the wind, snow, and rain; unwelcome intruders into a house not built like a palace. When I *had* a candle to burn, it was impossible to light it without taking the very necessary precaution of covering up the window to keep out the bouran; whereas now I am in a warm room, and surrounded by every comfort. I should probably shock you did I say which I prefer.

The road we travelled from the zavods was not the great post-road to Ekaterinburg, we were going across the country; when such is the case we always meet with prettier cottages, more tastefully decorated, and oftentimes nestled by the side of a wood. At some distance

from a very pretty spot we came upon an old couple; the man and woman both were kneeling on the ground, with outstretched arms, and sobbing painfully. It appeared that their only son, a lad about fourteen or fifteen, had just been taken away for a soldier. The cart which carried him off they had followed till they could see it no longer. We soon came up with it, when I expected to find the boy in tears; but, on the contrary, he looked as gay and happy as possible, feasting on white bread, probably the parting gift. I felt sorry for the parents, perhaps it was the last time they would ever see him; it is hard to have the children dragged away thus. At one station we met with a Jew, a really superior man, who complained bitterly of his hard fate. Three of his sons had been taken from him at different periods; and he said it was contrary to his creed that they should serve as soldiers.

It is needless to tell you we were welcomed with great heartiness on our return here by all our old friends. We arrived just in time for the carnival. This festival is spent in much the same way in all Russian towns. There is the usual amount of balls and parties, and the ladies are dressed with exquisite taste. Here they have a custom not found in Petersburg. In each house you enter during this week, and at whatever time of the day it may be, you are expected to partake of a blini, a kind of pancake, only much lighter, served with clarified butter and caviar, which latter no one appears to understand that I cannot eat it, especially after living in Russia such a number of years. After the blini, of which there are a great variety, comes coffee or tea; and

the more you eat and drink, the more honour you are considered to confer on your host.

But heaven preserve me from being in Ekaterinburg again at Easter. I will not say the booming of the bells was not grand for awhile, but at last it became positively deafening; we are living close to a church, the bells of which never ceased during the whole of Easter week. I do not know if you are aware that whoever chooses is at liberty to ring the bells this festival, and, unfortunately for my comfort, amateurs were not wanting. I should really have been ungenerous enough to rejoice had the same fate happened to the bells here as happened to one in Barnaoul. The officers had all contributed to the purchase of a very large bell, and the hanging of it was to be a great festival. A vast concourse of people met at the church in grand gala costume; the service was performed, and afterwards they commenced elevating the bell to its position in the belfry; but, when about half raised, snap went the rope, and you may judge the fate of the bell. The officers and ladies were sadly mortified, as it had cost a large sum of money; and still more so when they learned that the disaster was occasioned by the niggardliness of the priest, who had pocketed the money which he had received for a new rope, and substituted an old one. You may also have an idea of the confusion that was created; but, fortunately, no one was hurt or injured in any way.

Of course the grandest and most effective ball during Easter was at General Glinka's. At supper he adopts the Siberian fashion of not sitting with the guests,

but walking round the tables, and seeing that all are well attended to. Next to me sat a friend of his, a comely lady of fifty, extremely amusing and good-natured, and who had entered the bonds of matrimony. I had congratulated her; and, when the General stopped near me to enquire after my little mountain hero, I congratulated him on his friend's marriage, as is customary. I was ignorant that it was a sore point with the lady. It appeared that the General was constantly bantering her about this marriage. The bridegroom is an old man; he had been obliged to be carried up stairs to the church, and was also accommodated with a chair, being quite unable to stand during the ceremony; moreover, his habits whilst eating are so repugnant, that it is impossible to sit at table with him, so his daughter and she always take their meals alone.

She said: 'You do not for an instant suppose I married from any love I bore him. I can assure you it was simply to give me a position in society; for even at my age I am obliged to be very circumspect, otherwise I lay myself open to remarks; and I confess I am fond of my game at cards, and enjoy society amazingly. I can now wear a cap,' (only married ladies are supposed to wear them), 'go where I please, and go home when I please, without it being thought improper. I had a sufficiency to live upon; and I wanted nothing from him but the position.' She has done a most praiseworthy thing in devoting herself to the improvement of his daughter, and gives up many of her own pleasures to accompany her into society. She is just now greatly rejoiced at having received an offer of marriage for

the young lady, who is quite willing, so the wedding will take place this autumn; 'and then,' she says, 'I shall be quite at liberty to indulge myself.'

There are several English mechanics living at Ekaterinburg; and you would be amused to witness their struggles to outvie each other in splendour. One has his carriage and his tiger, therefore does not deign to associate with his countrymen who have not. The General patronises this family, and it is whispered, on account of the good fare he gets.

We deviated from our route to call at Iloutroffsky, to bid farewell to our friends the exiles, and spent three days with them! What a welcome we met with! As for the little mountain, he was nearly devoured. Then we had a thousand questions to answer about their comrades, from whom they had been separated for years. Having satisfied them on all these points, our journey in regions where few had ever ventured, and in parts probably where man had never set his foot, was talked over and discussed.

It was very late when we separated to seek rest. The following day we went to visit a school which the exiles have established here for both boys and girls; the latter have a matron, whose duty it is to teach them sewing and embroidery, in which they are quite proficient.

The boys, amongst other things, are taught drawing, at least those who display any taste for it; and for this purpose they are supplied with pencils and paper: but all their other studies, with the exception of reading, are acquired without either books or paper. At one end of the room there is a black board on which

everything is taught, and all their lessons, maps, &c., are marked down. Writing is taught by means of sand levelled along all the desks, on which each scholar writes with a pointed stick, and some of the boys, we were told, are really clever.

Amongst the exiles was a Mr. Tiesenhausen, an old gentleman, whom we found in a state of great excitement, having just received intelligence that he was pardoned; he could think and speak of nothing else but his return to his wife. The few days that intervened between his receiving his release from banishment and his departure appeared, I believe, as irksome to him as his whole twenty-eight years of exile. At length the hour arrived: he could scarcely spare time to take leave of his friends and comrades. News has just been received of him. He joined his wife in Courland. After the first meeting was over he grew dissatisfied. In the first place, he left her young, and now finds it difficult to reconcile himself to her altered appearance: besides which, he finds no companionship in her society, their tastes and habits, from long separation, being totally different. He is now just as anxious to return to Siberia as he was to leave it; and is said to be sighing and bewailing his unfortunate lot, which gave him freedom, and deprived him of his old comrades, with whom he had passed, even in banishment, many a pleasant hour.

The day before leaving Iloutroffsky a young naval officer arrived. He was on his way to join his vessel at Okhotsk, accompanied by his wife, an English woman, who was some years older than her husband.

She was nervous, and dreaded the journey before her; indeed they both appeared in a fright, and she believed she should die. I shall not be at all surprised to hear she is dead; as she had excited herself so much, that she was in a fever, and had to consult the doctor. I tried my utmost to encourage her, saying I was convinced that, having once accomplished the journey, she would think nothing of encountering it a second time; but I could not comfort her — she seemed unhappy. The following day they left before us, when many comparisons were made in favour of my husband. Our friends had observed, and borne in mind, with what care and attention I had been placed in the sledge, and covered up years before; whereas she, poor woman, had to get in herself, without assistance. Although Russians themselves, they all agreed they were far behind Englishmen in the care of their wives; and, though we had not so many luxuries in our sledge as this couple had, still there was a snugness and comfort which neither of them seemed to comprehend, but which our friends did perfectly. I could not but pity them both; a long journey before them, and, seemingly, so little companionship.

Speaking of doctors, there is a female one at Iloutroffsky. She has been properly educated, and has passed her examination at Kazan; she is a young woman of about five and twenty, and principally practises as a midwife. I met her at the house of one of the exiles. How strange and sad it seems to see highly talented men, who have been accustomed to the most refined society, mingling with the peasantry! Even their tables are

spread, and their food placed upon them, in a similar manner. Iakooshkin lived the most retired of all: he took me to see his dwelling, that I might be able to tell his friends what it was like. It was as scantily furnished as the abode of a hermit; but books, his great source of delight, he had in numbers. He told me that an old servant lived with him, whom he had had ever since his arrival at Iloutroffsky. Whatever it was her will and pleasure to give him he ate, and never but once had been unfortunate enough to make a remark; but it was a soup which was particularly good, and by accident he said so. For six whole months he never had a change; after that he was very guarded in expressing a liking for anything. He forbore telling her it had become extremely distasteful to him, for fear of wounding her feelings.

From Iloutroffsky we started to pay a passing visit to the fair at Irbit. What a singular sight presents itself to a stranger! Here are assembled persons from nearly every part of the world, and their varied costumes and languages are most interesting to see and listen to. At this fair scarcely anything you can name but can be purchased. It was remarkable the number of acquaintances we met with. There were several from the steppe: some we recognised, and others recognised us, and screamed out 'Aman!'* Others, again, were from Kiachta and Barnaoul. What amused me was to see the piles and piles of coloured boxes (red predominated), all bound with iron. There is not a peasant's house without one or more, in which all their treasures are enclosed

* Good day.

TRAVELLING IN THE OURAL—ROAD-SIDE CHAPEL, NEAR ZLATAOUST.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Oural Mountains—The Gold Mines—A Tea-party in a Thunder-storm—Costumes of the native Tribes—Tattooing—A Fête Day at Iltabanoffsky—Pleasurable Reminiscences of past Adventures.

Ekaterinburg, September 1853.

On June 11 we left this town for our trip to the Oural. At the first station we met Colonel and Madame Odynetz, niece to General Glinka: we had arranged to travel together to Zlataoust. The Colonel was going on a tour of inspection, and his wife was accompanying him.

Although journeying together, and starting at nearly the same moment, custom obliged us to go through the formality of calling at each other's residences to take an affectionate farewell, and to wish each other a prosperous and happy journey.

The country we have now been over is for the greater part very uninteresting, and was rendered more so by the bad weather. The first place we stopped at was Syssertskoi Zavod iron-works. We took up our abode with the director, Mr. Qvashinskoi, whose acquaintance we had made in Ekaterinburg. During the evening Mr. Salemerskoi, to whom these iron-works belong, called to see us. On the following morning we returned

his visit, and walked with him over his hot-houses, which are very extensive, and contain a magnificent collection of plants, which must have cost him a large sum of money, as many are destroyed in the transit. In Ekaterinburg there are wealthy merchants fond of horticulture; but who are illiberal enough to cultivate at the expense of their neighbour, by obtaining cuttings of his finest plants.

After leaving this zavod, we travelled for about fifty versts through the same monotonous scenery of low hills clad with pine forests; then we came upon some large lakes extending along the foot of the mountains, which here were more elevated and picturesque. Our road lay between lakes for more than five versts: indeed, from here to Kishtymskoi zavod, it was a succession of lakes. We were received most kindly by the director, Mr. Dekhanoff. The Odynetz party had arrived just before us. It was arranged that the Colonel should go his tour alone, leaving his wife at this zavod, where my husband desired to stay a few days, so that we might visit the environs. All that can be said of them is that they are pretty; but the scenery requires to be viewed by sunset, at which time an uninteresting spot appears lovely.

One day we formed a party to go to our host's farm, which is situated on a small lake, and contains what I had never seen before, a Chinese cow. The thick hair hung round her quite down to the ground, covering her as with a skirt.

From this zavod we intended making our way to the gold mines, but first visited Zlataoust, and its manufac-

tories of arms. We staid in the house of Colonel Jose, where we were received and treated with great hospitality.

On our arrival just outside the town, we found encamped, like a group of gipsies, about 200 peasants, who were proceeding to Siberia to form a new village. These migrations are not rare; and it is not at all an uncommon circumstance to pass whole villages which have been but recently deserted. The first time this came under my notice, the driver had stopped to arrange his horses, and I went in search of water. I entered one cottage after another, and found them all abandoned; it was as if a plague had passed over the spot. The act of quitting their homes is not voluntary, but compulsory.

Our next point was a gold mine near Aoushkool Ahoush (or Holy Lake). We passed several days most agreeably with the director, who often accompanied us in our expeditions into the surrounding country, and allowed us to wander wherever we liked in search of the picturesque and beautiful, till the shades of night crept over mountain and lake, when we would return to the priesk, planning on our way where we should go on the following day.

At our departure, our host determined with his two sisters, who had just arrived on a visit to him, to accompany us to take tea at the lake. The distance was about fifteen versts. We had far to ride to the next gold mine, and were anxious to be gone, as we saw dark clouds gathering, a sure sign of an approaching storm. On arriving at the lake, although it looked threatening,

they determined not to let us go without our favourite meal; but just as the somervar was ready, the thunder, which had been growling in the distance, came nearer and nearer, and at length the storm burst over us. The lightning was very vivid, and the thunder echoed from mountain to mountain; then the rain poured down in streams. The tea apparatus was hastily put under a piece of voilock, and we were glad to avail ourselves of the same shelter. For more than an hour did the storm rage; at length there was a break in the clouds, when our host, not in the least disheartened, set to work to assist in once more preparing the tea; but, alas! with no better result, for the storm returned upon us with redoubled fury, ere a single glass was poured out. Pitying the condition of our friends, we were compelled to take our leave; bidding them adieu, we mounted our horses, and rode off. The storm continued till we reached the priesk of Balbouche, where we were fortunate enough to find the director at home.

We passed several days at Balbouche, exploring its neighbourhood, which we found pretty. Then we visited the gold-washing machines, to one of which our host had given the name of California, from its likeness to those employed there; but it is pronounced by him to be bad, and is rarely made use of. The various processes are very interesting: first, digging the auriferous sand, then the washing, afterwards the smelting, and, lastly, the casting it into bars. This latter process I saw performed in Barnaoul. Several officers were present, as they always are, during the operation. The men employed at the furnace wore a large shield of voilock,

and, besides, have a long handle attached to the crucible in which the ore is smelted. The bright glare of the furnace cast on the faces of these men, and on the molten gold, with the officers in the foreground anxiously bending forward, makes the whole scene appear as though they were performing some unholy rite.

We entered several of the dwellings of the miners, and found them cleaner and better than almost any we had before visited. Some of the men had their wives with them; indeed at most of the priesks we found women, but these appeared to be of a superior class.

Hence we started for Iltabanoffsky gold mine, where we were received by the director and his family with the usual welcome; and a wish was expressed that Mr. Atkinson might find employment for his pencil for a lengthened period.

In this locality we found many Bashkir dwellings, but in a most wretched condition; the inhabitants are ever dirtier and more dissipated near towns or priesks. The Toungooz living in the vicinity of the priesks on the Yenissey equalled these people both in dirt and dissipation, but the holiday costume of the latter was much finer. The dress of the Bashkir is made from sheep-skins, and consists of a pair of trowsers and coat—men and women both alike; thus making it difficult to distinguish the sexes.

The Toungooz costume is made from the skins of deer, and the boots as well as coat are splendidly embroidered with glass beads. The dress is formed of boots or leggings which reach to the thigh, and over these is worn

the coat, which reaches to the tops of the boots, and is ornamented with strips of leather and strings of beads; the back, front, and sleeves are embroidered in patterns with various-coloured beads; then they have a cap to correspond. But their ordinary dress is the plain skin; in fact, sometimes they have scarcely any clothing at all, and neither men nor women wear shirts. The children in summer invariably run about naked, until they are ten or twelve years old. The Toungooz in the region of the Yenissey were the only tribes we met with who were tattooed; their faces, particularly those of the women, are sometimes quite enamelled: it is done with a needle and colour.

Shortly after our arrival we learned there was going to be a fête in honour of the name-day of one of the ladies. Grand preparations were being made, and numbers were expected from the neighbouring priesks, as well as from Zlataoust. The guests arrived on the eve of the important day: where they were all lodged was a mystery. Had a tent been placed for us on the steppe, we should have been thankful; for we were nearly devoured in the room we occupied. It is astonishing to us how anyone can live in the way they do here. The second evening we fared better, as we had a bed made up in a small drawingroom; that is to say, our bear-skins were spread on the floor. I believe I have told you that neither bed nor bed linen is provided in a Russian house; visitors are expected to bring these necessaries with them. Various amusements were arranged for the entertainment; but dancing was the principal feature. A pavilion standing in front of the

dwelling was tastefully ornamented with branches and flowers for this purpose; and in the evening it was prettily lighted with coloured lamps, similar to those we saw in Maimatchin.

Then there was a shed or outhouse of some kind, in which a stage was erected, and where we had 'Tableaux vivants' very well got up. I must say that all seemed bent on not only amusing themselves, but each other; and we being the greatest strangers, the greatest attention was paid to us. I cannot say we either of us looked dressed for a ball. When I heard there was going to be one, we determined upon proceeding on our journey; but they pressed us with such good will to stay, that we consented to do so.

After visiting one or two smaller priesks we went to Maiass. The house of the director is prettily situated in a valley; and from my window I had a charming view of the Ilmantau, which rises close to the town of Maiass. We had lovely drives into the surrounding country, visiting lakes, woods, and mountains.

The number of magpies met with throughout Siberia is surprising. At times, on looking around, they appear the only things with life in them. Not only in the steppes and forests, but also in the towns, they collect in multitudes; and if by chance they can discover linen hanging anywhere, they peck and tear it into threads, as I found to my cost in Barnaoul, where my linen was completely destroyed before I became aware of their mischievous propensities.

I should have preferred making this little excursion into these mountains when we first started, and before

we had made our way into Siberia, when probably I might have been able to give you a more interesting description than I can possibly do now; for, after the sublime scenes we have passed through, everything here seemed tame.

The pleasure is greatly enhanced, and the blood flows with greater rapidity through the veins, when we have to think where we shall get a dinner, and are constantly on the alert looking for one; or when we are uncertain about the direction in which we shall find water. If we chance to be on the steppe, and a little rising ground is seen, how exhilarating is the gallop to it! Then follows the question to the one who has ascended, 'Do you see any smoke?' or 'Is water visible?' And when, perhaps, I am a little weary from the heat and the long day's ride, a caziole or some other animal is seen bounding over the plain, the cry of the hunters is heard, and away they gallop, tearing along like madmen. My horse, hearing these sounds, determines to have a race also, and away he flies with me on his back; all the tugging in the world will not stop him; and I, the lightest of the party, am soon far in advance. Then all commence calling and hallooing for me to pull up; but my horse springs forward with apparently renewed vigour at the shouting from behind, and only slackens when he is fairly tired, and has frightened the animal towards the mountains, and probably lost our dinner; when I turn his head, and retrace my steps, scolding him the while for his stupidity. I now look back on all those scenes, and repeat what we have often and

often said, that willingly would we face ten times more toil and difficulty rather than go down to mother earth without having beheld them.

Our last journey is accomplished, and we only await good winter roads to start for Petersburg, where we hope to join our friends at Christmas.

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